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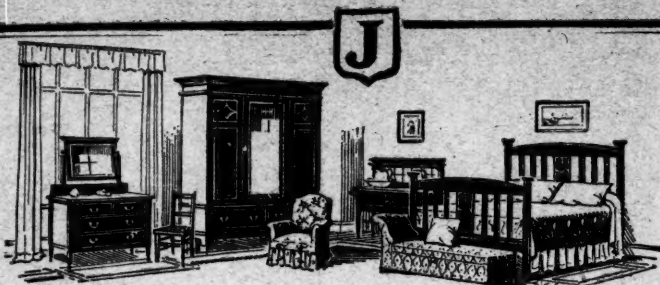
CORNHILL

MAGAZINE

1922.

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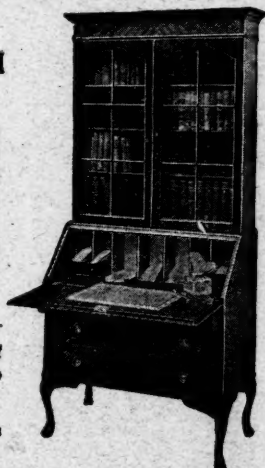
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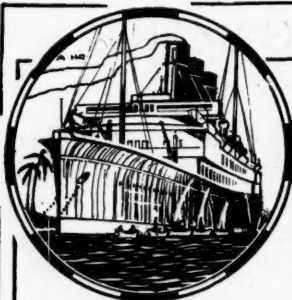
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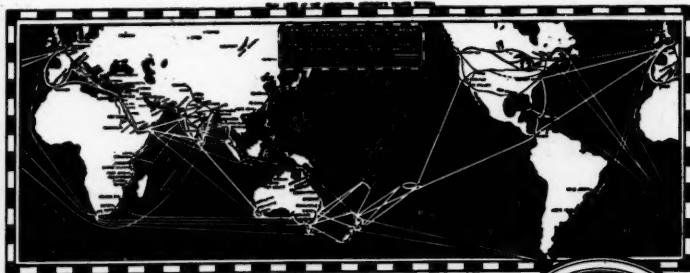
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THE CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY 1922.

OVINGTON'S BANK.

BY STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

CHAPTER IV.

IN remote hamlets a few churches still recall the fashion of Garthmyle. It was a wide church of two aisles having clear windows, through which a flood of cold light fell on the whitewashed walls, and on the maze of square pews, some coloured drab, some a pale blue, through which narrow alleys, ending in culs-de-sac, wound at random. The Griffin memorials, though the earliest were of Tudor date, were small and mean, and the one warm scrap of colour in the church was furnished by the faded red curtain which ran on iron rods round the Squire's pew and protected his head from draughts. That curtain was watched with alarm by many, for at a certain point in the service it was the Squire's wont to draw it aside, and to stand for a time with his back to the east while his hard eyes roved over the congregation. Woe to the absentees! His scrutiny completed, with a grunt which carried terror to the hearts of their families, he would draw the curtain, turn about again, and compose himself to sleep.

In its severity and bleakness the church fairly matched the man, who, old and gaunt and grey, was its central figure; who, like it, embodied, meagrely and plainly as he dressed, the greatness of old associations, and like it, if in a hard and forbidding way, owned and exacted an unchanging standard of duty.

For he was the Squire. Whatever might be done elsewhere, nothing was done in that parish without him. The parson, aged and apathetic, knew better than to cross his will—had he not to get in his tithes? The farmers were his tenants, the overseers rested in the hollow of his hand. Hardly a man was hired, and no man was relieved, no old wife sent back to her distant settlement, no lad apprenticed, but as he pleased. He was the Squire.

On Sundays the tenants waited in the churchyard until he arrived, and it was this which deceived Arthur when, Mrs.

Bourdillon feeling unequal to the service, he reached the church next morning. He found the porch empty, and concluding that his uncle had entered, he made his way to the Cottage pew, which stood abreast of the great man's. But in the act of sitting down he saw, glancing round the red curtain, that Josina was alone. It struck him then that it would be pleasant to sit beside her and entertain himself with her conscious face, and he crossed over and let himself into the Squire's pew. He had the satisfaction of seeing the blood mount swiftly to her cheeks; but the next moment he found the old man—who had that morning sent word that he would be late—at his elbow, in the act of entering behind him.

It was too late to retreat, and with a face as hot as Josina's he stumbled over the straw-covered footstool and sat down on her other hand. He knew that the Squire would resent his presence after what had happened, and when he stood up his ears were tingling. But he soon recovered himself. He saw the comic side of the situation, and long before the sermon was over, he found himself sufficiently at ease to enjoy some of the *agréments* which he had foreseen.

Carved roughly with a penknife on the front of the pew was a heart surmounting two clasped hands. Below each hand were initials—his own and Josina's; and he never let the girl forget the August afternoon, three years before, when he had induced her to do her share. She had refused many times; then, like Eve in the garden, she had succumbed on a drowsy afternoon when they had had the pew to themselves and the drone of the preacher's voice had barely risen above the hum of the bees. She had been little more than a child at the time, and ever since that day the apple had been to her both sweet and bitter. For she was not a child now, and, a woman, she rebelled against Arthur's power to bring the blood to her cheeks and to play—with looks rather than words, for of these he was chary—upon feelings which she could not mask.

Of late resentment had been more and more gaining the upper hand with her. But to-day she forgave. She feared that which might pass between him and his uncle at the close of the service, and she had not the heart to be angry. However, when the dreaded moment came she was pleasantly disappointed. When they reached the porch, 'Take my seat, take my meat,' the Squire said grimly. 'Are you coming up?'

'If I may, sir?'

'I want a word with you.'

This was not promising, but it might have been worse, and little more was said as the three passed, the congregation standing uncovered, down the Churchyard Walk and along the road to Garth.

The Squire, always taciturn, strode on in silence, his eyes on his fields. The other two said little, feeling trouble in the air. Fortunately at the early dinner there was a fourth to mend matters in the shape of Miss Peacock, the Squire's housekeeper. She was a distant relation who had spent most of her life at Garth; who considered the Squire the first of men, his will as law, and who from Josina's earliest days had set her an example of servile obedience. To ask what Mr. Griffin did not offer, to doubt where he had laid down the law, was to Miss Peacock flat treason; and where a stronger mind might have moulded the girl to a firmer shape, the old maid's influence had wrought in the other direction. A tall meagre spinster, a weak replica of the Squire, she came of generations of women who had been ruled by their men and trained to take the second place. The Squire's two wives, his first, whose only child had fallen, a boy-ensign, at Alexandria, his second, Josina's mother, had held the same tradition, and Josina promised to abide by it.

When the Peacock rose Jos hesitated. The Squire saw it. 'Do you go, girl,' he said. 'Be off!'

For once she wavered—she feared what might happen between the two. But 'Do you hear?' the Squire growled. 'Go when you are told.'

She went then, but Arthur could not restrain his indignation. 'Poor Jos!' he muttered under his breath.

Unluckily the Squire heard the words, and 'Poor Jos!' he repeated, scowling at the offender. 'What the devil do you mean, sir? Poor Jos, indeed? Confound your impudence! What do you mean?'

Arthur quailed, but he was not lacking in wit. 'Only that women like a secret, sir,' he said. 'And a woman, shut out, fancies that there is a secret.'

'Umph! A devilish lot you know about women!' the old man snarled. 'But never mind that. I saw your mother yesterday.'

'So she told me, sir.'

'Ay! And I dare say you didn't like what she told you! But I want you to understand, young man, once for all, that you've got to choose between Aldersbury and Garth. Do you

hear? I've done my duty. I kept the living for you, as I promised your father, and whether you take it or not, I expect you to do yours, and to live as the Griffins have lived before you. Who the devil is this man Ovington? Why do you want to mix yourself up with him? Eh? A man whose father touched his hat to me and would no more have thought of sitting at my table than my butler would! There, pass the bottle.'

'Would you have no man rise, sir?' Arthur ventured.

'Rise?' The Squire glared at him from under his great bushy eyebrows. 'It's not to his rise, it's to your fall I object, sir. A d—d silly scheme this is, and one I won't have. D'you hear, I won't have it.'

Arthur kept his temper, oppressed by the other's violence. 'Still, you must own, sir, that times are changed,' he said.

'Changed? Damnably changed when a Griffin wants to go into trade in Aldersbury.'

'But banking is hardly a trade.'

'Not a trade? Of course it's a trade—if usury is a trade! If pawn-broking is a trade! If loan-jobbing is a trade! Of course it's a trade.'

The gibe stung Arthur and he plucked up spirit. 'At any rate, it is a lucrative one,' he rejoined. 'And I've never heard, sir, that you were indifferent to money.'

'Oh! Because I'm going to charge your mother rent, eh? Well, isn't the Cottage mine? Or because fifty years ago I came into a cumbered estate and have pinched and saved and starved to clear it? Saved? I have saved. But I've saved out of the land like a gentleman, and like my fathers before me, and not by usury. Not by money-jobbing. And if you expect to benefit—but there, fill your glass, and let's hear your tongue. What do you say to it?'

'As to the living,' Arthur said mildly, 'I don't think you consider, sir, that what was a decent livelihood no longer keeps a gentleman as a gentleman. Times are changed, incomes are changed, men are richer. I see men everywhere making fortunes by what you call trade, sir; making fortunes and buying estates and founding houses.'

'And shouldering out the old gentry? Ay, damme, and I see it too,' the Squire retorted, taking the word out of his mouth. 'I see plenty of it. And you think to be one of them, do you? To join them and be another Peel, or one of Pitt's money-bag

peers, eh? That's in your mind, is it? A Mr. Coutts? And to buy out my lord and drive your coach and four into Aldersbury, and splash dirt over better men than yourself?'

'I should be not the less a Griffin.'

'A Griffin with dirty hands!' with contempt. 'That's what you'd be. And vote Radical and prate of Reform and scorn the land that bred you. And talk of the Rights of Men and money-bags, eh? That's your notion, is it, by G—d?'

'Of course, sir, if you look at it in that way——'

'That's the way I do look at it!' The Squire brought down his hand on the table with a force that shook the glasses and spilled some of his wine. 'And it's the way you've got to look at it, or there won't be much between you and me—or you and mine. Or mine, do you hear! I'll have no tradesman at Garth and none of that way of thinking. So you'd best give heed before it's too late. You'd best look at it all ways.'

'Very well, sir.'

'Any more wine?'

'No, thank you.' Arthur's head was high. He did not lack spirit.

'Then hear my last word. I won't have it! That's plain. That's plain, and now you know. And, hark ye, as you go out, send Peacock to me.'

But before Arthur had made his way out, the Squire's voice was heard, roaring for Josina. When Miss Peacock presented herself, 'Not you! Who the devil wants you?' he stormed. 'Send the girl! D'you hear? Send the girl!'

And when Josina, scared and trembling, came in her turn, 'Shut the door!' he commanded. 'And listen! I've had a talk with that puppy there, who thinks that he knows more than his betters. D—n his impertinence, coming into my pew when he thought I was elsewhere! But I know very well why he came, young woman, sneaking in to sit beside you and make sheep's eyes when my back was turned. Now, do you listen to me. You, keep him at arm's length. Do you hear, miss? You'll have nothing to say to him unless I give you leave. He's got to do with me now, and it depends on me whether there's any more of it. I know what he wants, but by G—d, I'm your father, and if he does not mend his manners, he goes to the right-about. So let me hear of no more billing and cooing and meeting in pews, d—n you, unless I give the word! D'you understand, girl?'

'But I think you're mistaken, sir,' poor Jos ventured. 'I don't think that he means——'

'I know what he means. And so do you. But never you mind! Till I say the word there's an end of it. The puppy, with his Peels and his peers! Men my father wouldn't have—but there, you understand now, and you'll obey, or I'll know the reason why!'

'Then he's not to come to Garth, sir?'

But the Squire checked at that. Family feeling and the pride of hospitality were strong in him, and to forbid his only nephew the family house went beyond his mind at present.

'To Garth?' angrily. 'Who said anything about Garth? No, Miss, but when he comes, you'll stand him off. You know very well how to do it, though you look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth! You'll see that he keeps his distance. And let me have no tears, or—d——n the fellow, he's spoiled my nap. There, go! Go! I might as well have a swarm of wasps about me as such folks! Pack o' fools and idiots! Go into a bank, indeed!'

Jos did go, and shutting herself up in her room would not open to Miss Peacock, who came fluttering to the door to learn what was amiss. And she cried a little, but it was as much in humiliation as grief. Her father was holding her on offer, to be given or withheld, as he pleased, while all the time she doubted, and more than doubted, if he to whom she was on offer, he from whom she was withheld, wanted her. There was the rub.

For Arthur, for more than a year past, and ever since he had begun to attend at the bank, had been strangely silent. He had looked and smiled and teased her, had sometimes pressed her hand or touched her hair, but in sport rather than in earnest, meaning little. And she had begun to see this, and with the womanly pride, of which, gentle and timid as she was, she had her share, she had schooled herself to accept the new situation. Now, her father had taken Arthur's suit for granted and humbled her. So Jos cried a little. But they were not very bitter tears.

CHAPTER V.

ARTHUR was somewhat intimidated by his uncle's harshness, and he took care to be at the bank early enough on the Monday to anticipate the banker's departure for Garth. He was certain

that to approach the Squire at this moment in the matter of the railroad was to invite disaster, and he gave Ovington such an account of the quarrel as he thought would deter him from going over at present.

But the banker had a belief in himself which success and experience in the management of men had increased. He was convinced that self-interest was the spring which moved nine men out of ten, and though he admitted that the family quarrel was untimely, he did not agree that as between the Squire and a good bargain it would have weight.

'But I assure you, sir, he's like a bear with a sore head,' Arthur urged.

'A bear will come to the honey if its head be sore,' the banker answered, smiling.

'And perhaps upset the hive?'

Ovington laughed. 'Not in this case, I think. And we must risk something. Time presses and he blocks the way. However, I'll let it stand over for a week and then I'll go alone. We must have your uncle.'

Accordingly a week later, discarding the tilbury and smart man-servant that he had lately set up, he rode over to Garth, considering as he journeyed the man whom he was going to meet and of whom, in spite of his self-assurance, he stood in some awe.

Round Aldersbury were larger landowners and richer men than the Squire. But his family and his name were old, and by virtue of long possession he stood high among the gentry of the county. He had succeeded at twenty-two to a property neglected and loaded with debt, and his father's friends—this was far back in the old King's reign—had advised him to sell; let him keep the house and the home-farm and pay his debts with the rest. But pride of race was strong in him, he had seen that to sell was to lose the position which his forbears had held, and he had refused. Instead he had set himself to free the estate, and he had pared, he had pinched, he had almost starved himself and others. He had become a byword for parsimony. In the end, having benefited much by enclosures in the 'nineties, he had succeeded. But no sooner had he deposited in the bank the money to pay off the last charge than the loss of his only son had darkened his success. He had married again—he was by this time past middle age—but only a daughter had come of the marriage, and by that time to put shilling to shilling and acre to acre had become

a habit of which he could not break himself, though he knew that only a woman would follow him at Garth.

Withal he was a great aristocrat, a Tory of the Tories, stern and unbending. Fear of France and of French doctrines and pride in his caste were in his blood. The *Quarterly Review* ranked with him after his Bible, and very little after it. Reform under the most moderate aspect was to him a shorter name for Revolution. He believed implicitly in his class, and did not believe in any other class. Manufacturers and traders he hated and distrusted, and of late jealousy had been added to hatred and distrust. The inclusion of such men in the magistracy, the elevation of Peel to the Ministry had made him fancy that there was something in the Queen's case after all; when Canning and Huskisson had also risen to power he had said that Lord Liverpool was ageing and the Duke was no longer the man he had been.

He was narrow, choleric, proud, miserly; he had been known to carry an old log a hundred yards to add it to his wood-pile, and to travel a league to look for a lost sixpence. He dressed shabbily, which was not so much remarked now that dandies aped coachmen, as it had been in his younger days; and he rode about his fields on an old white mare which he was believed to hold in affection next after his estate and much before his daughter. He ruled his parish with a high hand. He had no mercy for poachers. But he was honest and he was just. The farmers must pay the wage he laid down—it was a shilling above the allowed rate. But the men must work it out, and woe betide the idle; they had best seek work abroad, and heaven help them if a foreign parish sent them home. In one thing he was before his time: he was resolved that no able-bodied man should share in the rates. The farmers growled, the labourers grumbled, there were hard cases. But he was obdurate—work your worth, or starve! And presently it began to be noticed that the parish was better off than its neighbours. He was a tyrant, but he was a just tyrant.

Such was the man whom Ovington was going to meet, and from whose avarice he hoped much. He had made his market of it once, for it was by playing on it that he had lured the Squire from Dean's, and so had gained one of his dearest triumphs over the old Aldersbury Bank.

His hopes would not have been lessened had he heard a dialogue that was at that moment proceeding in the stable-yard at Garth to an accompaniment of clattering pails and swishing

besoms. 'He've no bowels!' Thomas the groom declared with bitterness. 'He be that hard and grasping he've no bowels for nobody!'

Old Fewtrell, the Squire's ancient bailiff, sniggered. 'He'd none for you, Thomas,' he said, 'when you come back gallus drunk from Baschurch Fair. None of your Manchester tricks with me, says Squire, and, lord, how he did leather 'ee.'

Thomas did not like the reminiscence. 'What other be I saying!' he snarled. 'He've no bowels even for his own flesh and blood! Did'ee ever watch him in church? Well, where be he a-looking? At his son's moniment as is at his elbow? Never see him, never see him, not once!'

'Well, I dunno as I 'ave, either,' Fewtrell admitted.

'No, his eyes is allus on t'other side, a-counting up the Griffins before him, and filling himself up wi' pride.'

'Dunno as I couldn't see it another way,' said the bailiff thoughtfully.

'What other way? Never to look at his own son's moniment?'

'Well, mebbe——'

'Mebbe?' Thomas cried with scorn. 'Look at his darter! He an't but one, and he be swilling o' money! Do he make much of her, James Fewtrell? And titivate her, and pull her ears bytimes same as you with your grand-darters? And get her a horse as you might call a horse? You know he don't. If she's not quick, it's a nod and be damned, same as to you and me!'

Old Fewtrell considered. 'Not right out the same,' he decided.

'Right out, I say. You've been with him all your life. You've never knowed no other and you're getting old, and Calamity, he be old too, and may put up with it. But I don't starve for no Squire, and I'm for more wage. I was in Aldersbury Saturday and wages is up and more work than men! While here I'm a-toiling for what you got twenty year ago. But not me! I bin to Manchester. And so I'm going to tell Squire.'

The bailiff grinned. 'Mebbe he'll take a stick same as before.'

'He'd best not!' Thomas said, with an ugly look. 'He'd best take care, or——'

'Whist! Whist! lad. You be playing for trouble. Here be Squire.'

The Squire glared at them, but he did not stop. He stalked into the house and, passing through it, went out by the front door. He intended to turn right-handed, and enter the high-terraced garden

facing south, in which he was wont to take, even in winter, a few turns of a morning. But something caught his eye, and he paused. 'Who's this?' he muttered, and shading his eyes made out a moment later that the stranger was Ovington. A visit from him was rare enough to be a portent, and the figure of his bank balance passed through the Squire's mind. Had he been rash? Ovington's was a new concern; was anything wrong? Then another idea, hardly more welcome, occurred to him: had the banker come on his nephew's account?

If so—however, he would soon know, for the visitor was by this time half-way up the winding drive, sunk between high banks; which, leaving the road a third of a mile from the house, presently forked, the left branch swerving through a grove of beech trees to the front entrance, the right making directly for the stables.

The Squire met his visitor at the gate and, raising his voice, shouted for Thomas. 'I am sorry to trespass on you so early,' Ovington said as he dismounted. 'A little matter of business, Mr. Griffin, if I may trouble you.'

The old man did not say that it was no trespass, but he stood aside punctiliously for the other to precede him through the gate. Then, 'You'll stay to eat something after your ride?' he said.

'No, I thank you. I must be in town by noon.'

'A glass of Madeira?'

'Nothing, Squire, I thank you. My business will not take long.'

By this time they stood in the room in which the Squire lived and did his business. He pointed courteously to a chair. He was shabby, in well-worn homespun and gaiters, and the room was shabby, walled with bound Quarterlies and old farm books, and littered with spurs and dog leashes—its main window looked into the stable yard. But there was about the man a dignity implied rather than expressed, which the spruce banker in his shining Hessians owned and envied. The Squire could look at men so that they grew uneasy under his eye, and for a moment, owning his domination, the visitor doubted of success. But then again the room was so shabby. He took heart of grace.

'I shouldn't trouble you, Mr. Griffin,' he said, sitting back with an assumption of ease, while the Squire from his old leather chair observed him warily, 'except on a matter of importance. You will have heard that there is a scheme on foot to increase the value of the woollen industry by introducing a steam railroad;

it is a new invention which, I admit, has not yet been proved. But I have examined it as a business man, and I think that much is to be expected from it. A limited company is being formed to carry out the plan, if it prove to be feasible. Sir Charles Woosenham has agreed to be Chairman, Mr. Acherley and other gentlemen of the county are taking part, and I am commissioned by them to approach you. I have the plans here——'

'What do you want?' The Squire's tone was uncompromising. He made no movement towards taking the plans.

'If you will allow me to explain?'

The old man sat back in his chair.

'The railroad will be a continuation of the Birmingham and Aldersbury railroad, which is in strong hands at Birmingham. Such a scheme would be too large for us. That, again, is a continuation of the London and Birmingham railroad.'

'Built?'

'Oh no. Not yet, of course.'

'Begun, then?'

'No, but——'

'Projected?'

'Precisely, projected, the plans approved, the Bill in preparation.'

'But nothing done?'

'Nothing actually done as yet,' the banker admitted, somewhat dashed. 'But if we wait until these works are finished we shall find ourselves anticipated.'

'Ah!'

'We wish, therefore, to be early in the field. Much has appeared in the papers about this mode of transport, and you are doubtless familiar with it. I have myself inquired into it, and the opinion of financial men in London is that these railroads will be very lucrative, paying dividends of from ten to twenty-five per cent.'

The Squire raised his eyebrows.

'I have the plans here,' the banker continued, once more producing them. 'Our road runs over the land of six small owners, who have all agreed to the terms offered. It then enters on the Woosenham outlying property, and thence, before reaching Mr. Acherley's, proceeds over the Garth estate, serving your mills, the tenant of one of which joins our board. If you will look at the plans?' Again Ovington held them out.

But the old man put them aside. 'I don't want to see them,' he said.

'But, Squire, if you would kindly glance——'

'I don't want to see them. What do you want?'

Ovington paused to consider the most favourable light in which he could place the matter. 'First, Mr. Griffin, your presence on the Board. We attach the highest importance to that. Secondly, a way-leave over your land for which the Company will pay—pay most handsomely, although the value added to your mills will far exceed the immediate profit.'

'You want to carry your railroad over Garth?'

'Yes.'

'Not a yard!' The old man tapped the table before him. 'Not a foot!'

'But our terms—if you would allow me to explain them?'

'I don't want to hear them. I am not going to sell my birthright, whatever they are. You don't understand me? Well, you can understand this.' And abruptly the Squire sat up. 'I'll have none of your d—d smoking, stinking steam-wagons on my land in my time! Oh, I've read about them in more places than the papers, sir, and I'll not sell my birthright and my people's birthright—of clean air and clean water and clean soil for any mess of pottage you can offer! That's my answer, Mr. Ovington.'

'But the railroad will not come within a mile of Garth.'

'It will not come on to my land! I am not blind, sir. Suppose you succeed. Suppose you drive the mails and coaches and the stage-wagons off the road. Where shall I sell my coach-horses and hackneys and my tenants their heavy nags? And their corn and their beans? No, by G—d,' stopping Ovington, who wished to interrupt him. 'You may delude some of my neighbours, sir, and you may know more about money-making, where it is no question how the money is made, than I do! But I'll see that you don't delude me! A pack of navigators upsetting the country, killing game and robbing hen-roosts, raising wages and teaching honest folks tricks? Not here! If Woosenham knew his own business, and Acherley were not up to his neck in debt, they'd not let themselves be led by the nose by——'

'By whom, sir?' Ovington was on his feet by this time, his eyes smouldering, his face paler than usual. They confronted

each other. It was the meeting, the collision of two powers, of two worlds, the old and the new.

'By whom, sir?' the Squire replied sternly—he too had risen. 'By one whose interests and breeding are wholly different from theirs and who looks at things from another standpoint! That's by whom, sir. And one word more, Mr. Ovington. You have the name of being a clever man and I never doubted it until to-day; but have a care that you are not over clever, sir. Have a care that you do not lead your friends and yourself into more trouble than you think for! I read the papers and I see that everybody is to grow rich between Saturday and Monday. Well, I don't know as much about money business as you do, but I am an old man, and I have never seen a time when everybody grew rich and nobody was the loser.'

Ovington had controlled himself well; and he still controlled himself, but there was a dangerous light in his eyes. 'I am sorry,' he said, 'that you can give me no better answer, Mr. Griffin. We hoped to have, and we set some value on your support. But there are, of course—other ways.'

'You may take your railroad any way you like, so long as you don't bring it over Garth.'

'I don't mean that. If the railroad is made at all it must pass over Garth—the property stretches across the valley. But the Bill, when presented, will contain the same powers which are given in the later Canal Acts—a single proprietor cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the public interests, Mr. Griffin.'

'You mean—by G—d, sir,' the Squire broke out, 'you mean, do you, that you will take my land whether I will or no?'

'I am not using any threat.'

'But you do use a threat!' roared the Squire, towering tall and gaunt above his opponent. 'You do use a threat! You come here——'

'I came here—' the other answered—he was quietly drawing on his gloves—to put an excellent business investment before you, Mr. Griffin. As you do not think it worth while to entertain it, I can only regret that I have wasted your time and my own.'

'Pish!' said the Squire.

'Very good. Then with your permission I will seek my horse.'

The old man turned to the window and opened it. 'Thomas,' he shouted violently. 'Mr. Ovington's horse.'

When he turned again. 'Perhaps you may still think better of it,' Ovington said. He had regained command of himself. 'I ought to have mentioned that your nephew has consented to act as Secretary to the Company.'

'The more fool he!' the Squire snarled. 'My nephew! What the devil is he doing in your Company? Or for the matter of that in your bank either?'

'I think he sees more clearly than you that times are changed.'

'Ay, and he had best have a care that these fine times don't lead him into trouble!' the old man retorted, full of wrath, and well aware that the other had found a joint in his armour.

'I hope not, I hope not. Good-day, Mr. Griffin; I can find my way out. Don't let me trouble you.'

'I will see you out, if you please. After you, sir.' Then, with an effort which cost him much, but which he thought was due to his position, 'You are sure that you will take nothing?'

'Nothing, I thank you.'

The Squire saw his visitor to the door; but he did not stay to see him ride away. He went back to his room and to a side window at which it was his custom to spend much time. It looked over the narrow vale, little more than a glen, which the eminence, on which the house stood, cut off from the main valley. It looked on its green slopes, on the fern-fringed brook that babbled and tossed in its bottom, on the black and white mill that spanned the stream, and on the Thirty Acre covert that clothed the farther side and climbed to the foot of the great limestone wall that towered alike above house and glen and rose itself to the knees of the boundary hills. And looking on all this, the Squire in fancy saw the railroad scoring and smirching and spoiling his beloved acres. It was nothing to him, that in fact the railroad would pass up the middle of the broad vale behind him—he ignored that. He saw the hated thing sweep by below him, a long black ugly snake, spewing smoke and steam over the green meadows, fouling the waters, darkening the air.

'Not in my time, by G—d!' he muttered, his knees quivering a little under him—for he was an ageing man and the scene had tried him. 'Not in my time!' And at the thought that he, the owner of all, hill and vale, within his sight, and the descendant of generations of owners—that he had been threatened by this upstart, this loan-monger, this town-bred creature of a day, he swore with fresh vigour.

He had at any rate the fires of indignation to warm him, and the satisfaction of knowing that he had spoken his mind and had not had the worst of the bout. But the banker's feelings as he jogged homewards on his hackney were not so happy. In spite of Bourdillon's warning he had been confident that he would gain his end. He had fancied that he knew his man and could manage him. He had believed that the golden lure would not fail. But it had failed, and the old man's gibes accompanied him, and like barbed arrows clung to his memory and poisoned his content.

It was not the worst that he must return and own that Arthur had been wiser than he; that he must inform his colleagues that his embassy had failed. Worse than either was the hurt to his pride. Certain things that the Squire had said about money-making, his sneer about the difference in breeding, his warning that the banker might yet find that he had been too clever—these had pricked him to the quick, and the last had even caused him a pang of uneasiness. And then the Squire had shown so clearly the gulf that in his eyes lay between them!

Ay, it was that which rankled: the knowledge, sharply brought home to him, that no matter what his success, no matter what his wealth, nor how the common herd bowed down to him, this man and his like would ever hold themselves above him, would always look down on him. The fence about them he could not cross. Add thousands to thousands as he might, and though he conquered Lombard Street, these men would not admit him of their number. They would ever hold him at arm's length, would deal out to him a cold politeness. He could never be of them.

As a rule Ovington was too big a man to harbour spite, but as he rode and fumed, a plan which he had already considered put on a new aspect and by and by his brow relaxed and he smote his thigh. Something tickled him and he laughed. He thought that he saw a way to avenge himself and to annoy his enemy, and by the time he reached the bank he was himself again. Indeed, he had not been human if he had not by that time owned that whatever Garth thought of him he was something in Aldersbury.

Three times men stopped him, one crossing the street to intercept him, one running bare-headed from a shop, a third seizing his rein. And all three sought favours, or craved advice, all, as they retreated, were eyed askance by those who lacked their courage or their impudence.

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For the tide of speculation was still rising in the country, and even in Aldersbury had reached many a back-parlour where the old stocking or the money-box was scarcely out of date. Thousands sold their Three per cents., and the proceeds had to go somewhere, and other proceeds, for behind all there was real prosperity in the country. Men's money poured first into a higher and then into a lower grade of security and raised each in turn, so that fortunes were made with astonishing speed. The banks gave extended credit; everything rose. Men who had bought in fear found that they had cleared a profit before they had had time to tremble. They sold, and still there were others to take their place. It seemed as if all had only to buy and to sell and to grow rich. Only the very cautious stood aside, and one by one even these slid tempted into the stream.

The more venturesome hazarded their money afar, buying shares in steamship companies in the West Indies, in diamond mines in Brazil, or in cattle companies in Mexico. The more prudent preferred undertakings which they could see and which their limited horizon could compass, and to these such a local scheme as the Valleys Railroad held out a tempting bait. They knew nothing about a railroad, but they knew that steam had been applied to ocean travel, and they knew Aldersbury and the woollen district. Here was something the growth and progress of which they could watch, and which once begun could not vanish in a night.

Then the silence of those within and the rumours spread without added to its attractions. Each man felt that his neighbour was stealing a march upon him, and that if he were not quick he would not get in on equal terms.

One of Ovington's waylayers wished to know if the limit at which he had been advised to sell his stock was likely to be reached. 'I sold on Saturday,' the banker answered, 'two pounds above your limit, Davies. The money will be in the bank in a week.' He spoke with Napoleonic curtness, and rode on, leaving the man, amazed and jubilant, to calculate his gains.

The next wanted advice. He had a hundred in hand if Mr. Ovington would not think it too small. 'Call to-morrow—no, Thursday,' Ovington said, hardly looking at him. 'I'll see you then.'

The third ran bare-headed out of a shop. He was a man of more weight, Purslow the big draper on Bride Hill, who had been

twice Mayor of Aldersbury; a tradesman, bald and sleek, whom fortune had raised so rapidly that old subservience was continually at odds with new importance. 'Just a word, Mr. Ovington,' he stuttered, 'a word, sir, by your leave? I'm a good customer.' He had not laid aside his black apron but merely twisted it round his waist, a sure sign, in these days of his greatness, that he was flustered.

The banker nodded. 'None better, Purslow,' he answered. 'What is it?'

'What I says, then—excuse me,—is, if Grounds, why not me? Why not me, sir?'

'I don't quite——'

'If he's to be on the Board, he and his mash-tubs——'

'Oh!' The banker looked grave. 'You are thinking of the Railroad, Purslow?'

'To be sure! What else?—excuse me! And what I say is, if Grounds, why not me? I've been mayor twice and him not even on the Council? And I'm not a pauper, as none knows better than you, Mr. Ovington. If it's only that I'm a tradesman, why, there ought to be a tradesman on it, and I'll be bound as many will follow my lead as Grounds's.'

The banker seemed to consider. 'Look here, Purslow,' he said, 'you are doing very well, not a man in Aldersbury better. Take my advice and stick to the shop.'

'And slave for every penny I make!'

'Slow and sure is a good rule.'

'Oh, damn slow and sure!' cried the draper, forgetting his manners. 'No offence, sir, I'm sure. Excuse me. But slow and sure, while Grounds is paid for every time he crosses the street, and doubles his money while he wears out his breeches!'

'Well,' said Ovington, with apparent reluctance, 'I'll think it over. But to sit on the Board means putting in money, Purslow. You know that, of course.'

'And haven't I the money?' the man cried, inflamed by opposition. 'Can't I put down penny for penny with Grounds? Ay, though I've served the town twice, and him not even on the Council!'

'Well, I'll bear it in mind. I can say no more than that,' Ovington rejoined. 'I must consult Sir Charles. It's a responsible position, Purslow. And, of course, where there are large profits, as we hope there may be, there must be risk. There must

be some risk. Don't forget that. Still,' touching up his horse with his heel, 'I'll see what I can do.'

He gained the bank without further stay, and there the stir and bustle which his practised eye was quick to mark sustained the note already struck. There were customers coming and going: some paying in, others seeking to have bills renewed, or a loan on securities that they might pay calls on them, or accommodation of one kind or another. But with easy money these demands could be granted, and many a parcel of Ovington's notes passed out amid smiling and general content. The January sun was shining as if March winds would never blow, and credit seemed to be a thing to be had for the asking.

It was only within the last seven years that Ovington's had ventured on an issue of notes. Then, a little before the resumption of cash payments, they had put them forth with a tentative, 'If you had rather have bank paper it's here.' Some had had the bad taste to prefer the Abraham Newlands, a few had even asked for Dean's notes. But borrowers cannot be choosers, the notes had gradually got abroad, and though at first they had returned with the rapidity of a homing pigeon, the readiness with which they were cashed wrought its effect, and by this time the public were accustomed to them.

Dean's notes bore a big D, and Ovington's, for the benefit of those who could not read, were stamped with a large C.O., for Charles Ovington.

Alone with his daughter that evening the banker referred to this. 'Betty,' he said, after a long silence, 'I am going to make a change. I am going to turn C.O. into Company.'

She understood him at once, and 'Oh, father!' she cried, laying down her work. 'Who is it? Is it Arthur?'

'Would you like that?'

She replied by another question. 'Is he really so very clever?'

'He's a gentleman—that's much. And a Griffin, and that's more, in a place like this. And he's—yes, he's certainly clever.'

'Cleverer than Mr. Rodd?'

'Rodd! Pooh! Arthur's worth two of him.'

'Quite the industrious apprentice!' she murmured, her hands in her lap.

'Well, you know,' lightly, 'what happened to the industrious apprentice, Betty?'

She coloured. 'He married his master's daughter, didn't

he? But there are two words to that, father. Quite two words.'

'Well, I am going to offer him a small share. Anything more will depend upon himself—and Clement.'

She sighed. 'Poor Clement!'

'Poor Clement!' The banker repeated her words pettishly. 'Not poor Clement, but idle Clement! Can you do nothing with that boy? Put no sense into him? He's good for nothing in the world except to moon about with a gun. Last night he began to talk to me about Cobbett and some new wheat. New wheat, indeed! What rubbish!'

'But I think,' timidly, 'that he does understand about those things, father.'

'And what good will they do him? I wish he understood a little more about banking! Why, even Rodd is worth two of him. He's not in the bank four days in the week. Where is he to-day?'

'I am afraid that he took his gun—but it was the last day of the season. He said that he would not be out again. He has been really better lately.'

'Though I was away!' the banker exclaimed. And he said some strong things upon the subject, to which Betty had to listen.

However, he had recovered his temper when he sent for Arthur next day. He bade him close the door. 'I want to speak to you,' he said; then he paused a moment while Arthur waited, his colour rising. 'It's about yourself. When you came to me I did not expect much from the experiment. I thought that you would soon tire of it, being what you are. But you have stood to it, and you have shown a really considerable aptitude for the business. And I have made up my mind to take you in—on conditions, of course.'

Arthur's eyes sparkled. He had not hoped that the offer would be made so soon, and, much moved, he tried to express his thanks. 'You may be sure that I shall do my best, sir,' he said gratefully.

'I believe you will, lad. I believe you will. Indeed, I am thinking of myself as well as of you. I had not intended to make the offer so soon—you are young and could wait. But you will have, of course, to bring in a certain sum, and capital can be used at present to great advantage.'

Arthur looked grave. 'I am afraid, sir——'

'Oh, I'll make it easy,' Ovington said. 'This is my offer. You will put in five thousand pounds, and will receive for three years twelve per cent. upon this in lieu of your present salary of one hundred and fifty—the hundred you are to be paid as Secretary to the Company is beside the matter. At the end of three years, if we are both satisfied, you will take an eighth share—otherwise you will draw out your money. On my death, if you remain in the bank, your share will be increased to a third on your bringing in another five thousand. You know enough about the accounts to know——'

'That it's a most generous offer,' Arthur exclaimed, his face aglow. And with the frankness and enthusiasm, the sparkling eye and ready word that won him so many friends, he expressed his thanks.

'Well, lad,' the other answered pleasantly, 'I like you. Still, you had better take a short time to consider the matter.'

'I want no time,' Arthur declared. 'My only difficulty,' candidly, 'is about the money. My mother's six thousand is charged on Garth, you see.'

This was a fact well known to Ovington, and one which he had taken into his reckoning. Perhaps, but for it, he had not been making the offer at this moment. But he concealed his satisfaction and a smile, and 'Isn't there a provision for calling it up?' he said.

'Yes, there is—at three months. But I am afraid that my mother——'

'Surely she would not object under the circumstances. The increased income might be divided between you so that it would be to her profit as well as to your advantage to make the change. Three months, eh? Well, suppose we say the money to be paid and the articles of partnership to be signed four months from now?'

Difficulties never loomed very large in this young man's eyes. 'Very good, sir,' he said gratefully. 'Upon my honour, I don't know how to thank you.'

'It won't be all on your side,' the banker answered good-humouredly. 'Your name's worth something, and you are keen. I wish to heaven you could infect Clement with a tithe of your keenness.'

'I'll try, sir,' Arthur replied buoyantly. At that moment he felt that he could move mountains.

'Well, that's settled, then. Send Rodd to me, will you, and

do you see if I have left my pocket-book in the house. Betty may know where it is.'

Arthur went through the bank, stepping on air. He gave Rodd his message, and in a twinkling he was in the house. As he crossed the hall his heart beat high. Lord, how he would work! What feats of banking he would perform! How great would he make Ovington's, so that not only Aldshire but Lombard Street should ring with its fame! What wealth would he not pile up, what power would he not build upon it, and how he would crow, in the days to come, over the dull-witted clod-hopping Squires from whom he sprang, and who had not the brains to see that the world was changing about them and their reign approaching its end!

For he felt that he had it in him to work miracles. The greatest things seemed easy at this moment. The fortunes of Ovington's lay in the future, the cycle half turned—to what a point might they not carry them! During the last twelve months he had seen money earned with an ease which made all things appear possible; and alert, eager, sanguine, with an inborn talent for business, he felt that he had but to rise with the flowing tide to reach any position which wealth could offer in the coming age—that age which enterprise and industry, the loan, the mill, the furnace were to make their own. The age of gold!

He burst into song. He stopped. 'Betty!' he cried.

'Who is that rude boy?' the girl retorted, appearing on the stairs above him.

He bowed with ceremony, his hand on his heart, his eyes dancing. 'You see before you the Industrious Apprentice!' he said. 'He has received the commendation of his master. It remains only that he should lay his success at the feet of—his master's daughter!'

She blushed, despite herself. 'How silly you are!' she cried. But when he set his foot on the lowest stair as if to join her, she fled nimbly up and escaped. On the landing above she stood. 'Congratulations, sir,' she said, looking over the balusters. 'But a little less forwardness and a little more modesty, if you please! It was not in your articles that you should call me Betty.'

'They are cancelled! They are gone!' he retorted. 'Come down, Betty! Come down and I will tell you such things!'

But she only made a mocking face at him and vanished. A moment later her voice broke forth somewhere in the upper part of the house. She, too, was singing.

CHAPTER VI.

BETWEEN the village and Garth the fields sank gently, to rise again to the clump of beeches which masked the house. On the farther side the ground fell more sharply into the narrow valley over which the Squire's window looked, and which separated the knoll whereon Garth stood from the cliffs. Beyond the brook that babbled down this valley and turned the mill rose, first, a meadow or two, and then the Thirty Acre covert, a tangle of birches and mountain-ashes which climbed to the foot of the rock-wall. Over this green trough, which up-stream and down merged in the broad vale, an air of peace, of remoteness and seclusion brooded, making it the delight of those who, morning and evening, looked down on it from the house.

Viewed from the other side, from the cliffs, or the road which ran below them, the scene made a different impression. Not the intervening valley but the house held the eye. It was not large, but the knoll on which it stood was ^{was} scarped on that side, and the walls of weathered brick rose straight from the rock, fortress-like and imposing, displaying all their mass. The gables and the stacks of fluted chimneys dated only from Dutch William, but tradition had it that a strong place, Castell Coch, had once stood on the same site; and fragments of pointed windows and Gothic work, built here and there into the walls, bore out the story.

The road leaving the village made a right-angled turn round Garth and then, ascending, ran through the upper part of the Thirty Acres, skirting the foot of the rocks. Along the lower edge of the covert, between wood and water, there ran also a field-path, a right-of-way much execrated by the Squire. It led by a sinuous course to the Acherley property, and, alas, for good resolutions, along it on the afternoon of the very day which saw the elder Ovington at Garth came Clement Ovington, sauntering as usual.

He carried a gun, but he carried it as he might have carried a stick, for he had long passed the bounds within which he had a right to shoot; and at all times, his shooting was as much an excuse for a walk among the objects he loved as anything else. He had left his horse at the Griffin Arms in the village, and he might have made his way thither more quickly by the road. But

at the cost of an extra mile he had preferred to walk back by the brook, observing as he went things new and old; the dipper curtseying on its stone, the water-vole perched to perform its toilet on the leaf of a brook-plant, the first green shoots of the wheat piercing through the soil, an old labourer who was not sorry to unbend his back, and whose memory held the facts and figures of fifty-year-old harvests. The day was mild, the sun shone, Clement was happy. Why, oh, why were there such things as banks in the world?

At a stile which crossed the path he came to a stand. Something had caught his eye. It was a trifle, to which nine men out of ten would not have given a thought, for it was no more than a clump of snowdrops in the wood on his right. But a shaft of wintry sunshine, striking athwart the tiny globes, lifted them, star-like, above the brown leaves about them, and he paused, admiring them—thinking no evil, and far from foreseeing what was to happen. He wondered if they were wild, or—and he looked about for any trace of human hands—a keeper's cottage might have stood here. He saw no trace, but still he stood, entranced by the white blossoms that, virgin-like, bowed meek heads to the sunlight that visited them.

He might have passed longer, if a sound had not brought him abruptly to earth. He turned. To his dismay he saw a girl, three or four paces from him, waiting to cross the stile. How long she had been waiting, how long watching him, he did not know, and in confusion—for he had not dreamed that there was a human being within a mile of him—and with a hurried snatch at his hat, he moved out of the way.

The girl stepped forward, colouring a little, for she foresaw that she must climb the stile under the young man's eye. Instinctively, he held out a hand to assist her, and in the act—he never knew how, nor did she—the gun slipped from his grasp, or the trigger caught in a bramble. A sheet of flame tore between them, the blast of the powder rent the air.

'O my God!' he cried. He reeled back, shielding his eyes with his hands.

The smoke hid the girl, and for a long moment, a moment of such agony as he had never known, Clement's heart stood still. What had he done? oh, what had he done at last, with his cursed carelessness! Had he killed her?

Slowly, the smoke cleared away, and he saw the girl. She

was on her feet—thank God, she was on her feet! She was clinging with both hands to the stile. But was she—‘Are you—are you——’ he tried to frame words, his voice a mere whistle.

She clung in silence to the rail, her face whiter than the quilted bonnet she wore. But he saw—thank God, he saw no wound, no blood, no hurt, and his own blood moved again, his lungs filled again with a mighty inspiration. ‘For pity’s sake, say you are not hurt!’ he prayed. ‘For God’s sake, speak!’

But the shock had robbed her of speech, and he feared that she was going to swoon. He looked helplessly at the brook. If she did, what ought he to do? ‘Oh, a curse on my carelessness!’ he cried. ‘I shall never, never forgive myself.’

It had in truth been a narrow, a most narrow escape, and at last she found words to say so. ‘I heard the shot—pass,’ she whispered, and shuddering closed her eyes again, overcome by the remembrance.

‘But you are not hurt? They did pass! Tell me!’ The horror of that which might have been, of that which had so nearly been, overcame him anew, gave a fresh poignancy to his tone. ‘You are sure—sure that you are not hurt?’

‘No, I am not hurt,’ she whispered. ‘But I am very—very frightened. Don’t speak to me. I shall be right—in a minute.’

‘Can I do anything? Get you some water?’

She shook her head and he stood, looking solicitously at her, still fearing that she might swoon, and wondering afresh what he ought to do if she did. But after a minute or so she sighed, and a little colour came back to her face. ‘It was near, oh, so near!’ she whispered, and she covered her face with her hands. Presently, and more certainly, ‘Why did you have it—at full cock?’ she asked.

‘God knows!’ he owned. ‘It was unpardonable. But that is what I am! I am a fool, and forget things. I was thinking of something else, I did not hear you come up, and when I found you there I was startled.’

‘I saw.’ She smiled faintly. ‘But it was—careless.’

‘Horribly! Horribly careless! It was wicked!’ He could not humble himself enough.

She was herself now, and she looked at him, took him in, and was sorry for him. She removed her hands from the rail,

and though her fingers trembled she straightened her bonnet.
'You are Mr. Ovington?'

'Yes, Clement. And you are Miss Griffin, are you not?'

'Yes. You are a friend,' smiling tremulously, 'of my cousin's. I have heard of you from him.'

'Yes. May I help you over the stile? Oh, your basket!'

She saw that it lay some yards away, blackened by powder, one corner shot away; so narrow had been the escape! He had a feeling of sickness as he took it up. 'You must not go on alone,' he said. 'You might faint.'

'Not now. But I shall not go on. What——' Her eyes strayed to the wood, and curiosity stirred in her. 'What were you looking at so intently, Mr. Ovington, that you did not hear me?'

He coloured. 'Oh, nothing!'

'But it must have been something!' Her curiosity was strengthened.

'Well, if you wish to know,' he confessed, shamefacedly, 'I was looking at those snowdrops.'

'Those snowdrops?'

'Don't you see how the sunlight touches them? What a little island of light they make among the brown leaves?'

'How odd!' She stared at the snowdrops and then at him. 'I thought that only painters and poets, Mr. Wordsworth and people like that, noticed those things. But perhaps you are a poet?'

'Goodness, no!' he cried. 'A poet? But I am fond of looking at things—out of doors, you know. A little way back'—he pointed up-stream, the way he had come—'I saw a rat sitting on a lily leaf, cleaning its whiskers in the sun—the prettiest thing you ever saw. And an old man working at Bache's told me that he—but Lord, I beg your pardon! How can I talk of such things when I remember——?'

He stopped, overcome by the recollection of that through which they had passed. She, for her part, was inclined to ask him to go on, but remembered in time that this, all this was very irregular. What would her father say? And Miss Peacock? Yet, if this was irregular, so was the adventure itself. She would never forget his face of horror, the appeal in his eyes, his poignant anxiety. No, it was impossible to act as if nothing had happened between them, impossible to be stiff and to talk at arm's length

about prunes and prisms with a person who had all but taken her life—and who was so very penitent. And then it was all so interesting, so out of the common, so like the things that happened in books, like that dreadful fall from the Cobb at Lyme in 'Persuasion.' And he was not ordinary, not like other people. He looked at snowdrops!

But she must not linger now. Later, when she was alone in her room, she could piece it together and make a whole of it, and think of it, and compass the full wonder of the adventure. But she must go now. She told him so, the primness in her tone reflecting her thoughts. 'Will you kindly give me the basket?'

'I am going to carry it,' he said. 'You must not go alone. Indeed you must not, Miss Griffin. You may feel it more by and by. You may—go off suddenly.'

'Oh,' she replied, smiling, 'I shall not go off, as you call it, now.'

'I will only come as far as the mill,' humbly. 'Please let me do that.'

She could not say no, it could hardly be expected of her; and she turned with him. 'I shall never forgive myself,' he repeated. 'Never! Never! I shall dream of the moment when I lost sight of you in the smoke and thought that I had killed you. It was horrible! Horrible! It will come back to me often.'

He thought so much of it that he was moving away without his gun, leaving it lying on the ground. It was she who reminded him. 'Are you not going to take your gun?' she asked.

He went back for it, covered afresh with confusion. What a stupid fellow she must think him! She waited while he fetched it, and as she waited she had a new and not unpleasant sensation. Never before had she been on these terms with a man. The men whom she had known had always taken the upper hand with her. Her father, Arthur even, had either played with her or condescended to her. In her experience it was the woman's part to be ordered and directed, to give way and to be silent. But here the parts were reversed. This man—she had seen how he looked at her, how he humbled himself before her! And he was—interesting. As he came back to her carrying the gun, she eyed him with attention. She took note of him.

He was not handsome, as Arthur was. He had not Arthur's sparkle, his brilliance, his gay appeal, the carriage of the head that challenged men and won women. But he was not ugly, he

was brown and clean and straight, and he looked strong. He bent to her as if he had been a knight and she his lady, and his eyes, grey and thoughtful—she had seen how they looked at her.

Now, she had never given much thought to any man's eyes before, and that she did so now, and criticised and formed an opinion of them, implied a change of attitude, a change in her relations and the man's; and instinctively she acknowledged this by the lead she took. 'It seems so strange,' she said half-playfully—when had she ever rallied a man before?—'that you should think of such things as you do. Snowdrops, I mean. I thought you were a banker, Mr. Ovington.'

'A very bad banker,' he replied ruefully. 'To tell the truth, Miss Griffin, I hate banking. Pounds, shillings, and pence—and this!' He pointed to the country about them, the stream, the sylvan path they were treading, the wood beside them, with its depths gilded here and there by a ray of the sun. 'A desk and a ledger—and this! Oh, I hate them! I would like to live out of doors. I want'—in a burst of candour,—'to live my own life! To be able to follow my own bent and make the most of myself.'

'Perhaps,' she said with naïveté, 'you would like to be a country gentleman?' And indeed the lot of a country gentleman in that day was an enviable one.

'Oh no,' he said, his tone deprecating the idea. He did not aspire to that.

'But what, then?' She did not understand. 'Have you no ambition?'

'I'd like to be—a farmer, if I had my way.'

That surprised as well as dashed her. She thought of her father's tenants and her face fell. 'Oh, but,' she said, 'a farmer? Why?' He was not like any farmer she had ever seen.

But he would not be dashed. 'To make two blades of grass grow where one grew before,' he answered stoutly, though he knew that he had sunk in her eyes. 'Just that; but after all isn't that worth doing? Isn't that better than burying your head in a ledger and counting other folk's money while the sun shines out of doors, and the rain falls sweetly, and the earth smells fresh and pure? Besides, it is all I am good for, Miss Griffin. I do think I understand a bit about that. I've read books about it and I've kept my eyes open, and—and what one likes one does well, you know.'

'But farmers——'

'Oh, I know,' sorrowfully, 'it must seem a very low thing to you.'

'Farmers don't look at snowdrops, Mr. Ovington,' with a gleam of fun in her eyes.

'Don't they? Then they ought to, and they'd learn a lot that they don't know now. I've met men, labouring men who can't read or write, and it's wonderful the things they know about the land and the way plants grow on it, and the live things that are only seen at night, or stealing to their homes at daybreak. And there's a new wheat, a wheat I was reading about yesterday, Cobbett's corn, it is called, that I am sure would do about here if anyone would try it. But there,' remembering himself and to whom he was talking, 'this can have no interest for you. Only wouldn't you rather plod home weary at night, feeling that you had done something, and with all this'—he waved his hand—'sinking to rest about you, and the horses going down to water, and the cattle lowing to be let into the byres, and—and all that,' growing confused, as he felt her eyes upon him, 'than get up from a set of ledgers with your head aching and your eyes muddled with figures?'

'I'm afraid I have not tried either,' she said primly. But she smiled. She found him new, his notions unlike those of the people about her, and certainly unlike those of a common farmer. She did not comprehend all his half-expressed or ill-expressed thoughts, but not for that was she the less resolved to remember them, and to think of them at her leisure. For the present here was the mill, and they must part. At the mill the field-path which they were following fell into a lane, which on the right rose steeply to the road, on the left crossed a cart-bridge, shaken perpetually by the roar and splashed by the spray of the great mill-wheel. Thence it wound upwards, rough and stony, to the back premises of Garth.

He, too, knew that this division of the ways meant parting, and humility clothed him. 'Heavens, what a fool I've been,' he said, blushing, as he met her eyes. 'What must you think of me, prating about myself when I ought to have been thinking only of you and asking your pardon.'

'For nearly shooting me?'

'Yes—and thank God, thank God,' with emotion, 'that it was not worse.'

'I do.'

'I ought never to carry a gun again!'

'I won't exact that penalty.' She looked at him very kindly.

'And you will forgive me? You will do your best to forgive me?'

'I will do my best, if you will not carry off my basket,' she replied, with a smile, for he was turning away with the basket on his arm. 'Thank you,' as he restored it, and in his embarrassment nearly dropped his gun. 'Good-bye.'

'You are sure that you will be safe now?'

'If you have no fresh accident with your firearms,' she laughed. 'Please be careful.'

She nodded, and turned and tripped away. But she had hardly left him, she had not passed ten paces beyond the bridge, before her mood changed. The cloak of playfulness fell from her, reaction did its work. The colour left her cheeks, her knees shook as she remembered. She felt again the hot blast on her cheek, lived through the flash, the shock, the onset of faintness. Again she clung to the stile, giddy, breathless, the landscape dancing about her. And through the haze she saw his face, white, drawn, terror-stricken—saw it and strove vainly to reassure him.

And now—now he was soothing her. He was pouring out his penitence, he was upbraiding himself. Presently she was herself again; her spirits rising, she was playing with him, chiding him, exercising a new sense of power, becoming the recipient of a man's thoughts, a man's hopes and ambitions. The colour was back in her cheeks now, her knees were steady, she could walk. She went on, but slowly and more slowly, full of thought, reviewing what had happened.

Until, near the garden door, she was roughly brought to earth. Miss Peacock, visiting the yard on some domestic errand, had discerned her. 'Josina!' she cried. 'My certy, girl, but you have been quick! I wish the maids were half as quick when they go! A whole afternoon is not enough for them to walk a mile. But you've not brought the eggs?'

'I didn't go,' said Josina. 'I was frightened by a gun.'

'A gun?'

'And I felt a little faint.'

'Faint? Why, you've got the colour of a rose, girl. Faint? Well, when I want galeny eggs again I shan't send you. Where was it?'

'Under the Thirty Acres—by the stile. A gun went off, and——'

'Sho!' Miss Peacock cried contemptuously. 'A gun went off, indeed! At your age, Josina! I don't know what girls are coming to! If you don't take care you'll be all nerves and vapours like your aunt at the Cottage! Go and take a dose of gilly-flower-water this minute, and the less said to your father the better. Why, you'd never hear the end of it! Afraid because a gun went off!'

Josina agreed that it was very silly, and went quickly up to her room. Yes, the less said about it the better!

THE W. S. GILBERT OF HIS OWN LETTERS.

By H. ROWLAND BROWN AND ROWLAND GREY.

'DEAR MISS—, I will send you some of my plays autographed, but unfortunately I have quarrelled with my (former) *Bab Ballad* publisher. However, I will get you some copies from a bookseller, and send them to you in due course. I haven't any in my possession.—Yours very truly,

W. S. GILBERT.'

CAN you not imagine this letter appearing in a sale catalogue, labelled 'W. S. Gilbert, very characteristic,' to justify a fancy price? So, indeed, the pleased recipient did promptly picture its appearance some day when she could no longer treasure it, for we are all prone to generalise hastily concerning genius though not all are as quickly shown the error of the way.

The revelation of the real man happened years before the time when, with the emotion of the hero of 'The Aspern Papers,' she, with one other, was given gracious access to a wonderful box of letters, with the genuine W. S. Gilbert written clearly between their lines, whether expectedly lambent with a pretty wit, or all unexpectedly touched with a beautiful seriousness. This luckless person wrote a playlet for a charity, and became inordinately puffed up because her heroine was to be created by an attractive young actress. Alas, the interpreter fell ill at the supreme moment, and the wretched author had not merely to massacre her own innocent by taking the professional's place, but to commit the murder under the eye of W. S. Gilbert. She went home in despair, merely wondering by what mordant word he would keep her failure evergreen. Next morning instead the postman brought balm in Gilead.

'I am sorry you should have felt any apprehension at the prospect of my being present at the performance. I had heard so promising an account of your little play from Miss — that I was really anxious to hear it. I was very sorry I could not get near enough the stage to enable me to do so. The people you have really to dread are the average public, who know nothing of the difficulties of dramatic composition, and judge only by the impressions left on their minds by the performance. Men like myself, who have been through the mill, and have devoted their lives to learning the art of dramatic composition, know too well the difficulties, risks, and disappointments incident even to the most unpretentious

forms of stage play, not to make every sympathetic allowance for the novice in play-writing. It is when the beginner launches out into a five-act comedy that we are apt to be over-critical. . . . As to my chance of being appreciated by posterity, I fancy posterity will know as little of me as I shall of posterity.'

Most delicately did he realise how useless was the tinsel clink of compliment to one in such a parlous plight. 'Sorry I was placed where I could neither see nor hear,' and this to one then almost a stranger.

To be suddenly confronted with nearly a hundred letters in the fine clear script, with free permission to make extracts, offered a task at once difficult and delightful. Above all, there was a temptation to be resisted—the temptation to explain at last some of the fine shades of their writer's cryptic character by touching upon matters of which it is still too early to speak without reserve. The small sheets have the fragrance of rosemary rather than rue as they tell the story of an ideal friendship, unclouded to the last. Only 'a thing of shreds and patches' is possible, yet even patchwork can be charming if the colours be well assorted. It will be the fault of clumsy selection if it be not proved that Gilbert, like Lamb and FitzGerald, was a born letter-writer. It seems to require genius to be at once brief and happy, and certainly not every genius replies as promptly as he did to the snow-storms of begging letters which came to one who, to the blank amazement of his suburban neighbours, was as rich as they were 'only from writing words to operas, as if the words mattered!'

'DEAR MISS—,' (with cheque),—'I can but do your bidding, and sign myself yours obediently,

W. S. GILBERT.'

For he was ever that rarity, a cheerful giver, and what this means to those doomed to collect 'voluntary' contributions, they alone know.

He evidently shared Lamb's pleasant faith that 'Presents endear Absents,' when he sent off a complete 'Punch' to an invalid, or the whole of 'Everyman's Library' to a literary wanderer constantly shifting quarters abroad.

In dealing with the letters, accurate chronology and classification are alike impossible. The only thing to do is to glance through each little packet and quote, for instance, from one vaguely marked 'miscellaneous.'

'Did you know — ? She was married yesterday to — of the Eighteenth Hussars, with much pomp and ancienry. I can't understand why so much fuss is made over a partnership—or rather I don't understand why the process should not be applied to all partnerships. It seems to me that the union (say) of Marshall and Snelgrove might and should have been celebrated in the same fashion. Marshall waiting at the altar for Snelgrove to arrive (dressed in summer stock remnants), a choir to walk in front of Snelgrove, a Bishop and a Dean (and also a solicitor to ratify the deed of partnership), and a bevy of coryphée fitters-on to strew flowers in their path. It is a pretty idea, and invests a contract with a charm not to be found in a solicitor's or conveyancer's chambers.'

In sending a pressing invitation he adds :

'They are getting on rapidly with my electric lighting. Now mind, I am installing electric light simply that you may be able to do your hair in the most perfect possible manner. I have no other thought—no other design—so, if you decline to come and stay here, all my money and pains will be thrown away. I shall un-wire the house, pull down the engine house, sell the engine, and revert to paraffin oil ; so now you know.'

In the chilly spring of 1903 he breaks out :

'All our fruit and flowers are being ruined by this cussed weather, and my bones ache with rheumatism till I can almost hear them. I have used all the bad language I know (except one expletive which I am keeping for Coronation Day), and have sent to Whiteley's for a fresh batch.' . . .

He does not, however, explain why he failed to employ *The Sorcerer*.

'It is in all the special evening editions that you went to Drury Lane theatre last evening and caught a bad cold. That was very careless of you, and very unfair to your friends, who can't expect to be happy while you are suffering. I hope it won't be a very bad cold ; indeed, I hope it will be a very good cold and go away at once.'

On another occasion he asks pathetically :

'Why does the Almighty make delightful people and then make them go and live at Dunbar ? It is as though I wrote a masterpiece of a play and then stipulated that it should only be performed at the Theatre Royal, Spitzbergen. . . . Gracious Heavens ! what

has Dunbar done that it should be so favoured? There is a proverb, "Do as you would be done bar," or something like that; but it doesn't seem to throw any light on the question.'

There is an ironical interest in contrasting the handful of letters commenting on the meagre official recognition meted out to our 'English Aristophanes' with the abundant honours he won for himself. He had given the language an often mis-used adjective, and enriched the thesaurus of English letters with words and a wealth of quotation before his death. More popular than half the poets dead, and all the poets living, his real claim to an offer of the vacant laureateship was recognised by the fit though few. 'His foe was folly, and his weapon wit,' and, like his famous ancestor, Sir Humphrey Gilbert of 'Squirrel' fame, whose height and proportions were exactly the same as his own, he gave us a Newfoundland where 'sorrows go and pleasure tarries.'

His fairy folk were honest as they were merry. The lamps of burlesque were low and of evil odour when he flashed into our ken with elf maidens significantly wearing the clean radiant electric light star-wise in their hair.

In January 1907 he writes :

'Now I've a little bit of news for you. It is a *profound secret*, and I haven't told it to anybody: my news is that — has commissioned Lord Knollys to find out whether I would accept a knighthood, and as I expressed my willingness to do so, it will, I suppose, be conferred next May, when the birthday honours are announced. It is a tin-pot, twopenny halfpenny sort of distinction, but as no dramatic author as such ever had it for dramatic authorship alone, I felt I ought not to refuse it. I suppose it is to be given to me as a sort of impalpable old-age pension in consideration of my being a broken-down old ruin. Possibly the King may forget all about it (which wouldn't cause me a moment's annoyance), but those who know about these things say it is sure to be.'

That Sir John Vanbrugh was knighted for his hideous architecture, not for his sparkling licentious stage work, is too often forgotten. On July 1, 1907, he wrote as Sir William :

'I went yesterday to the Investiture at Buckingham Palace, and was duly tapped on both shoulders by Edward VII, and then kissed hands. I found myself politely described in the official list as Mr. William Gilbert, *playwright*, suggesting that my work was analogical to that of a wheelwright, or a millwright, or a wain-

wright, or a shipwright, as regards the mechanical character of the process by which our respective results are achieved. There is an excellent word "dramatist," which seems to fit the situation, but it is not applied until we are dead, and then we become dramatists as oxen, sheep, and pigs are transfigured into beef, mutton, and pork after their demise. You never hear of a novel-wright, or a picture-wright, or a poem-wright; and why a playwright? When the *Gondoliers* was commanded at Windsor by her late Majesty, the piece was described as "by Sir Arthur Sullivan," the librettist being too insignificant an insect to be worth mentioning on a programme which contained the name of the wig-maker in bold type! And I had to pay £37 10s. as my share of sending the piece down to Windsor, besides forfeiting my share of the night's profits at the Savoy.'

In the same year he speaks with pleasure of an ovation he received at a dinner given in his honour by the Old Playgoers Club to commemorate a revival of the operas.

'Four hundred and fifty sat down and I was made much of. Any amount of melted butter was (figuratively) poured down my back. The evening concluded with a number of selections from the Savoy operas, sung by the old Savoyards, who were present in great numbers. It's well I don't believe all the good things that were said about me, or I should be suffering from a swelled head and be too big for my boots. As it is, both head and feet are normal.'

'During the twenty years that I had the absolute control of the stage management of the Savoy operas, I never had a seriously angry word with any member of my company.'

This one sentence of his memorable speech that night may not be omitted.

The King, as we know, did not forget. In June 1908 Gilbert writes:

'We all went to the Derby, and I had a splinter of my usual good luck in drawing the second horse in the Club sweep—£75. I have drawn the winner no fewer than seven times at £300 a time, and this is the second time I have drawn the second horse. We went to Buckingham Palace a fortnight ago, and I never saw so many ugly and badly dressed women in so short a time.'

A few months earlier a representative banquet of congratulation upon his knighthood had been given him at the Savoy. His long and brilliant speech was received with an enthusiasm which he confesses delighted him. 'Even your stony heart would have

been softened, and you would have said to yourself, "There must be something in the old booby after all," is his conclusion. It was homage to his art, not to himself that appealed to him.

When he was invited by the Garrick Club to give it the prestige of his membership, he told the true version of this misrepresented matter to this trusted friend.

'I've just been elected to the Garrick Club, for which I was blackballed thirty-seven years ago—through a case of mistaken identity, for I was quite unknown then, and the Committee thought they were pilling another man. When they discovered their mistake they asked me to put myself up again, but it occurred to me that as the mistake was theirs, it was theirs to rectify it. Moreover, I am not one of those who turn the second cheek to the smiter. So matters have remained until the other day, when the Committee did me the honour of selecting me for immediate election "on account of my public distinction" (!) As Heaven had signified its displeasure at the action of the Committee of thirty-seven years ago by sweeping them off the face of the earth, and as I had no quarrel with the present Committee, who are all my very good friends, I accepted the honour they had proposed to confer on me. And so "the stone that the builders rejected," etc.'

Three things are notable in the easy style of the Gilbert letters—a Sévigné-like readiness to 'let the pen trot,' a plentiful use of the much decried parenthesis, and a fondness for underlining words. His tepid liking for Jane Austen may have been due to her animadversion upon the latter practice. He was pleasantly grateful for remembrance on birthdays on the part of those privileged to call him friend, not merely a glittering acquaintance dangerous to the pretentious and the boastful.

'It is a great lark being sixty-six—you try it. It is so delightful to have attained a time of life when one can feel quite sure that there is not the remotest chance of one's being a snake on another man's hearth. One feels *so* safe and so involuntarily good. I am slowly getting stronger, but I am still rather Richardy (I hate the slang expression dicky) in the knees. . . .' 'It is very pleasant to be sixty-seven, because one feels one is approaching one's prime of life. After seventy I don't want any congratulations, but condolences will be thankfully received.'

It is irresistible to go back a year or two.

'I am sure the clotted cream I received yesterday came from you, for who on earth but you would trouble about a poor devil

in his 66th year! I am sure your kindness will be fully rewarded hereafter, but I am equally sure that it was with no idea of that description that you sent it to me. Do you know how they are going to decide the Shakespeare-Bacon dispute? They are going to dig up Shakespeare and dig up Bacon; they are going to set their coffins side by side, and they are going to get Tree to recite *Hamlet* to them. And the one who turns in his coffin will be the author of the play.

'Hearty good wishes for you and yours during Christmas and the coming year. I hope I may be alive next Christmas that I may receive my good wishes (and for other reasons too, to be quite candid). . . . Have you heard this?

"Willie tricked out in his frock and sashes,
Fell in the fire, and was burnt to ashes.
The fire burnt low, and the room grew chill,
But nobody liked to poke poor Will."

'It seems to me that there is a pretty and tender sentiment underlying it.'

It is hard not to linger over all the Gilbertian birthdays. Of one he breaks out:

'Personally I am sick of birthdays. You see, I have had so many of them and they begin to pall, but (such is the inconsistency of the animal man) I feel I could do with a few more.'

And again:

'Such a letter tends to grease the wheels of the old machine as it goes lumbering downhill. I have had many letters of condolence, but none that have given me so much comfort as yours. Here's an impromptu riddle. "What is that of which we have all had too many, but of which none of us can have enough?" Why, a birthday, of course, you silly; fancy you not guessing it.' . . . 'Your delightful letter almost consoles me for being a crumbling old ruin. If I go on decaying much longer, excursion trains will be run in order that trippers may gaze upon me by moonlight (like Tintern Abbey), and I shall become a favourite resort for picnic parties and sentimental couples. But I shall not charge anything for admission, as I have a strong conviction that our monumental survivals ought to be accessible to everyone without payment.'

One pleasant trait he shared with Tennyson, to whom no veering literary fashions ever rendered him unfaithful, for he kept no secretary and replied to his own letters with unflinching if sometimes

ironical courtesy. Three hundred and fifty came when he was knighted, and each was answered personally. He did not value his own autograph as do certain 'celebrities' of the moment, who in their fear of enriching their correspondents send them a chilly type-written line signed by deputy, lest the precious thing should be sold to the highest bidder. The facsimile that appears on the page opposite gives a characteristic specimen of his handwriting.

It is amusing to know that W. S. Gilbert failed to obtain even an honourable mention in a once familiar trade Limerick competition; specimens in a letter seem to reflect upon the critical ability of the judges.

'When I asked a young girl of Portrush
 "What book do you read?" she said "Hush!
 I have happened to chance
 On a novel from France,
 And I hope it will cause me to blush."'

'There was a far-famed individdle
 Who had a bad pain in his middle,
 But a gentle emetic
 With Lamplough's Pyretic
 Soon made him as fit as a fiddle.'

His absolute mastery of rhyme was better shown in another Limerick made in a moment at dinner, when some rash guest instanced Decima as a difficult name with which to deal.

'There was a young lady, Miss Decima,
 Whose conduct was voted quite pessima;
 But she mended at last,
 On the eve of the fast
 Of the Sunday called Septuagesima.'

Whether he concocted the 'good stories' he professes to have heard and ostensibly repeats in his letters, is a nice question. One of the late Bishop of London is not his own.

'The Bishop went in a hansom from Victoria St. to Fulham Palace, and on arriving gave the exact fare, 2s. 6d. The cabman, who was very respectful, said: "I beg pardon, my Lord, but if St. Peter had been on earth, do you suppose he would only have given me half a crown?" The Bishop replied, "My good fellow, if St. Peter had been on earth he would have been at Lambeth, and you would only have had a shilling." Now, to show my perfect fairness I'll tell you a Roman Catholic story about Father Healey.

A young lady said to him, "Is it true, Father Healey, you have no misseltoe in Ireland?" "Alas, my dear," replied Healey, "it is only

TRAIN. BOSTON TO HARROW.
TELEPHONE, 19 BUCKLEY.

Grim's Dyke,
Harrow Weald.

3 June 1888

Dear Rowland Mowbray.

There is to be a
dress rehearsal of *Trial*
by way on Friday at
2.30 that photographs
may be taken, to sell
at the performance. Will
you kindly lend me your
robes for this purpose?

Very truly
yours,
W. S. Gilbert.

too true." "But," said the girl, "if young ladies can't kiss under the misseltoe, what in the world do they do?" "Why, they do it under the rose." Not bad for a mere parish priest.

The few letters with foreign post-marks are in one sense disappointing, at least to those who expect genius to have the magic power of painting a picture in half a dozen words. Gilbert was not of those who re-construct an ancient city in a sentence, or show us a country in a vivid paragraph. His pleasure or displeasure when travelling seemed dependent upon his company. For upon his return from one of his last voyages upon the sea he loved, he writes :

‘We had fine weather and smooth seas for our cruise (to Lisbon, Tangiers, the Canary Islands, Madeira, and Vigo), but I am glad to get home. Most of the 315 passengers were very trying—though there were a dozen or so of very pleasant people. I never saw such super-human hideousness as was presented by some of the party. It seemed to have been born into a world of Pantomime masks. The ship was much too crowded, but everything was very well done, comfortable cabins and good provender. I had three berths in my cabin, and think of applying for the Royal Bounty accordingly.’

Upon an earlier trip in the Mediterranean the same social drawbacks are recorded. ‘The ship was full of fussy old ladies and gouty old gentlemen. I called it “The Old Curiosity Shop,” which annoyed the old guys, who wanted to know what I called myself!’ If any of these injured persons read the birthday letters they will know now, and may be comforted. In 1910, before he made a solitary trip eastwards, he says : ‘I start for Constantinople on Wednesday. . . . I have been strongly advised to ally myself at once with the Young Turkish Party, but unfortunately I was not furnished with her address, so I scarcely know what to do.’ When he sought and found complete restoration to health at Helouan in 1900, he had been too often to Egypt to care to say much about it. His description of the terrible railway accident in which he happily escaped injury shows a parallel with his favourite novelist, Dickens, who met with a similar misadventure. It is notable how rarely Gilbert makes quotations in the letters, yet he once said that luggage even for one night would be incomplete without a volume of Dickens.

‘I’ve ordered the little edition of Dickens’ 35 volumes’ [he writes]. ‘The edition is not quite complete as the novels come out one by one as the copyright expires. It is a shameful thing that copyright *should* expire. It ought to be freehold, like land. Dickens’ daughter can scarcely manage to live, while any number

of publishers are making fortunes out of his work, for which, of course, they pay nothing.'

It was a pretty coincidence that one with such a pretty wit should have been born in the same month of the same year as Pickwick, and surely a merry star danced then.

II

Yet it is naturally to that part of the correspondence pertaining to his work that dwellers in a house boasting possession of the desk upon which many of the later operas were written turn eagerly. One of the Gilbertian legends dying hardest is the belief that in the various difficulties inherent to production and revival his hot temper was invariably at fault, and it is satisfactory to be able to answer his detractors with irrefragable evidence to the contrary. The first mention of a first night regards one of the many revivals of *Patience*, and one of the present chroniclers recalls how ill Gilbert was, and how he sat beside him in the green-room, listening to the distant roars of applause. Many present thought it would be his final appearance, little foreseeing that Sir Arthur Sullivan would be the first to sunder the unique collaboration by death. Gilbert was surprised at the enthusiasm that night. 'I had no idea,' he writes modestly, 'there would be so many encores. I managed somehow to stagger on the stage, and I only hope no one thought I had been drinking. My knees shook under me all the time.'

Dates become interesting at this juncture, and it was in 1903, regarding that enchanting bit of frolic fun *The Fairies' Dilemma*, he says :

'Shall I tell you a great secret? I'm writing a play that will be produced at the Garrick. . . . It seems quite odd after so many years' idleness. But I must make an effort to keep the little home together. When you see the piece, I think you'll call it rather "young" for a wretched old jossler in his sixty-eighth year.'

And 'young' the merry descendant of the old-time Easter extravaganza certainly was. In 1904 he continues :

'Now I've got to go to the Garrick Theatre for rehearsal. They are all very civil and kind, but it is different from the Savoy, where everything went by clock-work. There's a sad want of method at the Garrick and I've had to put my foot down!'

On May 6 he uttered a word not unseasonable to-day.

'I have every reason to be satisfied with the reception of the child of my own old age. I *was* there, but I wouldn't "bow on." The better class of dramatic authors have agreed not to do so, as there is invariably a body of roughs in the gallery who encourage an author to appear in order that they may insult him when he complies with their request. These butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers are the curse of the theatre. Utterly ignorant brutes, they take upon themselves to decide what is to be received and what is to be rejected, and consequently many authors only consider them in writing plays. This accounts for much of the bad work put before the public. If I were a manager I would close the gallery on first nights.'

Possibly his heart softened later towards this gallery before whose door the faithful Gilbertians waited for hours in every sort of weather. He was certainly pleased when, at the first revival of *The Pirates of Penzance* during which he had preferred to go alone to see *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, he was informed by one of us how a conceited actor who had the audacity to try to gag was rewarded by strident voices from aloft adjuring him to 'stick to the text.' The *Pirates* were just twenty years old, but classics need no revision. June 12, 1906, was one of the many occasions upon which Gilbert honoured one of the writers by wearing his barrister's wig for a reason contained in the following note to him, found amid a large packet of briefly worded invitations to first nights and such rehearsals as one of *Iolanthe*, when he bade his peers' chorus wear their coronets 'as if they were used to them.'

'DEAR —, —May I ask for the loan of your forensic robes on Friday next, for the performance of *Trial by Jury*. That is to say, if you haven't any Court work that day. I don't fancy the C——'s wigs!'

Of this special occasion he writes :

'I had to go to the — benefit yesterday, as I had to sit on the stage in the *Trial by Jury*. I had a tremendous reception. The whole thing is an absurdity. She is a very competent actress with a charming personality, but as she is receiving a salary of £200 a week, and going to America at a salary of £1,000 per week, I don't see that she is a fitting object of charity. There were plenty o

actors and actresses assisting to whom a £5 note would have been a godsend.'

It was a few months earlier that he noted an instance of the ingratitude of one of the many beginners he helped substantially, though even to his intimate friend he does not give the name :

'People have been discovering that I am a dramatic author, it seems to have burst upon them as a refreshing novelty, and so two of my old plays have been revived (*The Palace of Truth* and *Comedy and Tragedy*). . . . I have discovered the loveliest girl in the world—she is on the stage and quite inexperienced, with a good deal of dramatic aptitude. I've taken her in hand, and got her an engagement at £5 a week at the Criterion, and a further engagement at the Haymarket in the autumn. Not a bad beginning for a young girl who (until she met me) had not a friend in the dramatic profession. I am sorry to say she is an ungrateful little cat, and looks upon all I have done for her as quite in the natural order of things (!) We are just off in the big motor to stay with the —'s. I hate staying with people I don't love dearly, . . . but perhaps I shall learn to love them as I have learnt to love the income-tax.'

To turn over certain of the letters of 1906 is to make it plain which of his works was dearest to him, as it is dearest to all who are not too blind to recognise his claim to rank as a serious poet :

'*The Yeomen of the Guard* is to be revived at the Savoy on the 8th of December with a cast of which every member is a stranger to me, but I have not been consulted in any one particular. It is the greatest indignity I have ever suffered. *I am miserable about it.*'

The injury bit deep, yet he writes again in November :

'I am in great distress about *The Yeomen of the Guard*, for Mrs. Carte, to my great surprise and disgust, has cast it without consulting me in any way. This is absolutely incomprehensible to me, as she has always paid the greatest attention and deference to my wishes. Nevertheless, I am going to stage-manage it, as I don't want the piece to revert to me with a damaged reputation.'

Two who were present can endorse the reasonableness of the dissatisfaction contained in the following :

'I delayed answering your letter till after the production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*, that I might tell you of it. Well, it went magnificently, and I was received with such a roar of

enthusiasm—it is still ringing in my ears. The notices are all excellent, but I cannot say the performance was a good one. . . . Mrs. Carte wrote to me six weeks since to say that she had arranged to produce the *Yeomen* at the Savoy, and that she had cast the piece. Now, in every play produced there and elsewhere I have invariably settled the cast with the management, and in my agreement it never occurred to me to stipulate for a privilege which has been accorded to me as a matter of course by every management I have had to do with for forty years, and by no one more readily than Mrs. Carte—and the upshot is that she has got together a cheap and inefficient company. . . . The press has been exceedingly good-natured, but some of them find the dialogue stilted and pointless. I wonder what they would think of the music if it were sung by people who couldn't sing, or played by an orchestra from the Salvation Army. This is a growl, but I know you will really sympathise.'

That Gilbert had a comforting sense of the beauty of his achievement here it is delightful to know, and he was spared by death the mortification of seeing a leading literary newspaper publish a fine portrait of him with an appropriate verse of his loveliest lyric, 'Is Life a Boon?' beneath it, and appended to the quotation a note stating that 'these lines were written upon the death of Sir Arthur Sullivan.' It is a wonder this well-informed writer did not discover they were set to exquisite music by W. S. Gilbert.

In January 1907 he writes again,

'*The Yeomen of the Guard* has been successfully produced, and notwithstanding the inferior character of the company. *The fact is, the piece is manager-proof and actor-proof. They can damage it, but they can't kill it.*'

We all know it now, but some of us rejoice we knew it then.

Letters of this year touch upon the well-remembered incident of the performances of *The Mikado* being forbidden, for fear of wounding the susceptibilities of our Japanese allies. Smarting under a mistake he was the first to correct, he says:

'I suppose you have read that the King (with his unfailing tact) has forbidden that *The Mikado* shall ever be played again. That means at least five thousand pounds out of my pocket. It is so easy to be tactful when the cost has to be borne by somebody else. The "*Mikado*" of the opera was an imaginary monarch of a remote period, and cannot by any exercise of ingenuity be taken to be a slap on an existing institution. He has no more actuality than a

pantomime king, and it's a poor compliment to the Japs to suppose they would be offended by it. . . . But when tact gets the bit between its teeth there is no knowing where it will carry you. It is generally supposed that — was invited to Berlin to act by the Kaiser, with the malignant motive of showing the Germans what impostors we all are.'

It is satisfactory to know that a few days later Gilbert was much pleased to discover that he had been entirely misinformed.

'I learn from a friend, who had it direct from the King, that the *Japs* made the objection to *The Mikado*, and that it was at their instance it was suppressed. A delicate and polite action on the part of a guest towards a host. The rights in the piece do not revert to me for three years; by that time we shall probably be at war with Japan about India, and they will offer me a high price to permit it to be played. . . . I hear the King is very angry about it, as he was supposed to have done it off his own bat. They are going to do *Iolanthe* at the Savoy, and I hope it will be done better than the others. Mrs. Carte was at the Lord Chamberlain's weeping for two hours on end because they would not let her do *The Mikado*. King Edward's saving sense of humour should surely have secured him against such allegations as this.'

An allusion to *The Children's Pinafore* at the same date has its interest.

'I've just agreed to write *H.M.S. Pinafore* as a narrative for children, profusely illustrated. It will only take about a fortnight and they are to pay me £750 for it, which is pretty good. Also, the same publishers are to publish eight of the libretti in their original form, and will pay me £750 for that. The servants are greatly pleased, as now they feel sure they will get their wages next year. I don't know if I look particularly starved, but it has occurred to four different public bodies to invite me to public dinners as the "guest of the evening."'

It was in 1908 that he writes of *Fallen Fairies* 'There is just a chance (but it's a profound secret) that I may write another libretto, this time with Edward German. But I rather distrust my brain power, for who ever did good creative work at my time of life?' He refers to the matter again a few months later in a particularly amusing letter.

'A desire to write to you has come over me, and I always yield to temptations. Even Providence yields to them. If I do a rash

thing, I'm told I'm tempting Providence; and if Providence can't resist *my* humble temptations, how can I be expected to resist His? So I don't; in I always go head over heels. . . . I have finished Act I of the new libretto (there will be two Acts), and read it yesterday to German. He professed to be delighted with it—perhaps he was. I had some difficulty in getting the rusty, creaky old machine to work again, but after a few essays I found the harness sit well upon me. . . . I read a good story about Jenny Lind. Many years ago, in 1852, she was singing in Heidelberg. She was enthusiastically welcomed by the students, who dragged her carriage from the station to the hotel, serenaded her after the performance, and the next day (when she was to leave for Berlin) dragged her carriage from the hotel to the station and sang an enthusiastic farewell to her. As soon as the train had started, the students rushed in a body up to her bedroom, tore the sheets from the bed, cut them up into strips, and each student stuck a strip in his buttonhole and wore it all day long. That afternoon a stout and very greasy old gentleman said to Douglas Jerrold (who tells the story), "I think these Heidelberg students are all mad!" "No," said Jerrold; "they are fine high-spirited young fellows, a bit eccentric, but not mad." "Well," said the greasy old gentleman, "I'll tell you what they did to me. As soon as I had left my hotel this morning a body of them rushed to my bedroom, dragged the sheets from my bed, tore them into strips, and every one is now wearing a strip in his buttonhole." The moral of this seems to be that when you go into someone else's bedroom in an hotel, *be quite sure it's the bedroom you want. I always do.*

December 1, 1909, saw the first night of *Fallen Fairies*, of which he wrote next day:

'The piece went magnificently last night. . . . But the notices are rather disappointing. . . . As a matter of fact I have never had notices that were not more or less grudging. The press are always howling for something better than musical comedy, and when they get it they won't have it.'

That this was absolutely true makes the pity of it no less. The frequent essentially 'Gilbertian' objection to his using his own immortal *Bab Ballads* as basis for his own operas has become proverbial as an instance of critical ineptitude.

The last year of his life was marked by the striking success of *The Hooligan*, with all the old originality and a new and impressive seriousness.

'Your kind letter cheered me when I was somewhat down in the mouth for no particular reason,' he writes. . . . 'The old and crumbling ruin has been propped up, and under-pinned, and will, I think, stand a few months yet. My creepy piece, *The Hooligan*, is succeeding tremendously, but it must come to the end (for the time being) in a fortnight, as Welch's engagement was only for four weeks.'

It was the last triumph he was to record with the secure sense of sympathy only the perfect friendship can inspire. His view of friendship is beautifully expressed in his own words to this trusted correspondent.

'It is an infinite boon to possess at the fag end of a long life a dear friend who can enter into and sympathise with one's pleasures, cares, and troubles. Men of my age are like trees in late Autumn. Their friends have died away as the leaves have fallen from the trees, but it is enough for me to feel assured that there is at least one friend who will stick to me to the very end.'

And the end was very near. In what gallant fashion he met death will not be soon forgotten.

Scarcely a week before he died a speaker was asked to choose a 'really English' subject for a lecture in aid of a Charity chancing to be held on Empire Day, and had chosen 'The genius of W. S. Gilbert.' Greatly desiring a signed photograph for the occasion she had preferred a diffident petition, to meet with the following reply :

'DEAR MISS —,—Surely it should not demand much courage to ask that which it affords me so much pleasure to give. I feel highly flattered, and as proud as a peacock.' . . .

Gilbert was a born letter-writer. He was really fond of writing to those he felt congenial to him, and he was also a past master of business style. He conducted the whole of his affairs and of his very considerable landed estate without outside assistance. There are before us files of business correspondence which would do credit to a first-class trained commercial man. It is not with these, however, that we are concerned for the moment. For this side of his genius we prefer to think of him conversing on paper with his many friends, dealing also with the sometimes not inconsiderable morning budgets of begging letters and appeals. He always answered them himself, and his generosity

among the less fortunate members of the artistic professions was proverbial.

One story in this connexion. A man who described himself as a broken-down actor had been fined at Lambeth for some trivial offence. The paragraph caught Gilbert's eye, and he not only paid the fine, but invited the subject of his charity into the country, and set him up in a small house. The experiment was not a success; the same temptations beset Bushey and the Borough.

He was always very regular in correspondence, and a certain part of the day was allotted to letter-writing only. He left extraordinarily few papers behind him, and the only diary known to have been in his possession at the time of his death, and written at Grim's Dyke, is a volume in the characteristic firm bold writing, recording in French no more than the social day.

'I am thus able to leave my diary about,' he said, 'as I know the servants like reading it.'

This diary lay on the writing-desk which had accompanied him on many cruises in his own yacht, and on which also most of the first of the Savoy operas had dawned upon the world.

This particular desk is still in the beautiful white library, which with the ever-fresh flowers is the same as of old—perfect scents, and harmonies of colour and design. The master-presence has gone, but sometimes in the lengthening twilight you feel it is not far distant.

SNAKE-CHARMING EXTRAORDINARY.

AN article in the November CORNHILL by W. B. S. has prompted me to take up my pen, for I was the host to whom the writer refers, and the circumstances are so interesting, the methods of the snake-charmer so unimpeachably straightforward, that, if only for its scientific interest, I think the story ought to be carried further.

Can any scientist explain the secret of this man's influence over cobras; or can anyone give examples of others with the uncanny power which this man undoubtedly possessed?

Briefly, W. B. S. describes a visit to me in a large station in Upper India, and how a Mohammedan gentleman (we knew him as the Nawab Sahib) proceeded to track out and capture one cobra, and then its mate, without any of the piping and tom-toming and other paraphernalia which characterise the snake-charmer one is accustomed to see or read about. The tale is well told, and worth reading. To a sceptic, the facts as W. B. S. relates them have one fatal objection: the Nawab Sahib went out by himself, he says, for a short time with a servant, and then returned, and said he had heard of a snake being seen in a certain place to which he led us, and where he did capture two. As a matter of fact, I don't think the facts are quite correctly told. I seem to remember that the Nawab, moving about the compound, 'felt' that there was a snake the other side of the hedge: I know we waited by the hedge while one of us went in next door and asked the Doctor (the Doctor lived there) if we might come through. However, I repeated to several others what had happened that morning. One or two had heard of the man before, and I was told that when servants, descending into the basement of the local bank, had been frightened by a snake, they sent for the Nawab, who brought out seven within half an hour. Others were frankly sceptical; and I shall proceed to describe how I succeeded in convincing the arch-sceptics and, incidentally, in proving beyond any doubt that this man really had some mysterious power.

Twice I asked the Nawab to come up to my bungalow to go with me to the house of a friend, and in each case several snakes were found and caught in the garden. On a third occasion the head servant of the man, who shortly after this came and chummed with

me, came in at dinner-time and said he had stumbled over a snake. Nawab Sahib was invited next morning. He stood for a moment on the spot where the snake had been seen, and then led us to a small plot of ground by the outhouses, where, in a few minutes, he disturbed and captured three snakes.

But though personally I did not believe, nor considered it at all possible, that he had brought so many snakes with him, and had quietly had them 'slipped' before he began his hunt, yet there was, of course, the very outside possibility that there was some hidden trickery somewhere. In each case the servant who had taken my invitation to the Nawab did know whereabouts we were going to search in the morning.

Finally, I persuaded a friend, who was amused at my being taken in by what he was convinced was a simple hoax, to allow me to bring the Nawab Sahib some morning unannounced to his house, that my friend might watch him and see what happened. I told no one at all of this arrangement, nor did he. Both our wives were in England, so we did not even tell them! I had seen the man, and watched him so many times, and was quite confident that he could not fail, and so I determined upon an unimpeachable test.

Some days later I sent an orderly to ask the Nawab Sahib to come up next morning, if he had time. He arrived about seven o'clock. I sat with him for a time, and we had a cigarette, and I said to him: 'Nawab Sahib, there is a friend of mine who lives some way from here—his garden is jungly—he entirely disbelieves that you have any power to disturb and capture snakes, and thinks there is a trick somewhere. Will you let me take you there now,—at once?'

Here was a test, indeed. No one at all knew why I had asked the Nawab Sahib to come up, and he was not told who my friend was or where he lived.

'Certainly, Sahib,' he said. 'There is no trickery at all, as you have seen; and I will gladly come with you, and if there is a snake in the compound I shall find it.'

In those palmy days I owned a motor car; it came to the door, and, the Nawab Sahib by my side, I drove the half-mile or so to my friend's house. The Nawab Sahib's hired carriage we left behind at my bungalow, and he had no one with him at all, nor did he carry anything in his hands. My friend came out, and I introduced the Nawab Sahib. They shook hands, and my friend invited

him to come into the compound and find the snakes. He was still quite sceptical.

The *modus operandi* was the same as W. B. S. has graphically described. The Nawab stood, with right elbow and arm pressed against his side, his right hand raised to his head, and one of his fingers closing his right ear. All he required was an earthen gharra, or pot, to carry the captured snakes, and a cloth to tie over the mouth of the pot when any snakes were inside. He also carried a few grains of rice in his left hand. He moved slowly along, his head bent slightly forward, and now and then he would hesitate, as if listening. My friend, myself, and a few privileged servants followed a few paces behind, talking, if at all, only in a whisper. Suddenly, after a moment's hesitation, he made a dart to one side and seized by the tail a cobra that was wriggling away in the grass. This was duly consigned to the pot. Number one! We had the compound to search, and did not stop to extract fangs or to tease the cobra and make it sit up and expand its hood. Within a quarter of an hour we had five cobras in the pot, and had now reached a small square patch of ground, bounding the compound. Beyond was some ploughed fallow, and along the edge of the patch were four strands of barbed wire on posts to cut off the compound from the field. I should say that each one of the five snakes was not picked up immediately in front of the Nawab Sahib. Occasionally he would halt and peer forward into the grass, scattering a few grains of rice in the direction of his gaze. This, he told me afterwards, was to help him concentrate upon the spot. Perhaps nothing would move; perhaps he would see a snake, or once or twice one of us would see the black body of a snake hurrying through the grass, and would call him. In all cases he would follow it up and pick it up by the end of the tail; the pot would be brought forward, and the snake would join its fellows. Apart from the actual capture, it takes some skill to persuade an angry venomous snake, held aloft by the tail, to go into a dark pot! Once the head is well inside the pot, the rest of the snake seems to follow easily.

To return to our last and final patch. The Nawab Sahib stood at the edge, with a tense expression, streaming with perspiration, and seemingly very excited. The 'feeling' was strong upon him. Suddenly he saw a snake, and rushed forward. He ran several yards, and just as he bent to pick it up, I saw a second snake, making through the grass for the open field. I called out to the Nawab; he turned, to see the snake wriggling under the wires into

the field. With one snake held aloft in his right hand, which he had to keep held so that the cobra should not, in its struggles, be able to strike, the Nawab gave chase, scrambling through the wire and stumbling over the clods, until he caught up the second snake, which he picked up with his left hand and returned with the pair in triumph!

We adjourned to the bungalow and began to talk. The Nawab explained that he had some power, which would seem akin to hypnotism, of so disturbing a snake within the orbit of his influence, that it was fain to move from its place, to emerge, if it were in a hole, from its hole. 'The power,' he said, 'is projected through my eyes. See now, if I stare in the pot, I can put in my hand and no harm will come of it.'

Sure enough, he bent over the pot, and looking down towards it, he put in his hand and pulled the snakes about, lifting up the head of one and then of another. Some one spoke to him and he looked up. At once his arm seemed to jerk, he gave an expression of pain, and said 'Ah! I am bitten.' He withdrew his hand, and there on the third joint of his second finger were the tell-tale marks and a speck of blood. Waving his other hand to keep us away, he clenched his fist, and holding his hand some eight or nine inches from his face, looked intensely at the place where the skin was punctured. In a few moments, to my intense surprise, some yellow matter—just a little—came to the surface of the wound, and this he brushed off with a duster, smiling and saying 'Now that is all right.'

The above facts are not to be impeached. I have set them down exactly as they occurred, prompted to do so, as I said, by the fact that my friend's account in the November CORNHILL seemed to leave occasion to the sceptic to scoff. My friend was, and is, a senior commissioned officer in His Majesty's Army, and I was a senior official in the Indian Civil Service. The sceptic who was so triumphantly convinced, too, was the Departmental Head of one of the Civil Departments of Government; and the other occasions where the Nawab Sahib performed (it is not fair to say performed—let me say exhibited his powers) were all at the houses of gentlemen of position and experience.

What was this mysterious power? Was it a power peculiar to certain natures, or a power which could, under training, be perfected in anyone? If so, what training? And what or who is there in Lhasa, where the Nawab Sahib professed to have discovered his power?

Let me add, in conclusion, that the Nawab Sahib's powers were well known in the lower strata of Indian society, and were simply accepted as inexplicable. He told me that he caught 700 cobras, often, in a season; he never killed anything which he had been able to overcome by his will, he said; but he would give snakes, after tearing out their fangs as W. B. S. has described, to the countless beggars and professional charmers, who are to be found all over Upper India. I must repeat that he took no money; he used his power, and very exhausting he found it, where snakes were proving dangerous or unpleasant. He was not really of princely family, as his title might imply; but he was a pleasant gentlemanly fellow, was possessed of very small means, and would enjoy a glass of lemonade (as a good Mahomedan he would not touch wine or spirit), and a cigarette while he rested and cooled down before going home; and it was tacitly understood that you sent out, and paid the hire of his 'gari,' and said nothing about it!

A. K.

PUPPETS.

‘This is ghastly,’ muttered Gascoigne. ‘There is something unhallowed—a spectre in the air.’

The strong, clean mountain breeze caught the whisper and tossed it, laughing, into the laughing sunshine. The sun was in the heavens and life on earth, flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam, health on the gale, and freshness in the stream, yet the sinister suggestion remained insistent. Each swirl of mist as it swept up from the abysses below seemed to carry with it a wraith of evil.

In very truth, the setting of nature was a setting of the mind of the man. Clean, bold, and lofty as he was by disposition, the sick spume-clouds of hell were rising up within him and darkening his soul. A brother’s blood cried to him from the ground for vengeance—and yet, and yet, in the sight of man retribution by the individual is murder, and in the sight of high Heaven——.

Gascoigne put the thought from him. His brother had been cowardly slain, shot in the back, and his duty was to do justice upon the murderer. True it was that, as for evidence, there was not enough to hang a dog on—not enough to convince his fellow-men of the justice of his justice on his fellow-man. With the wavering of the conviction of his mind came a sense of physical uncertainty, of an instability of body as well as of purpose. Mind and body were reacting unconsciously, the one on the other. The man was on the verge of a real peril and one wherewith his mental wavering made him all the more unfitted to cope. He had mounted the hill by the easy track, and had descended on the other side to the point where the climbers’ route emerged from the Gray Rib End. Behind and above him rose the sun-bright summit, all a-sparkle with dewy gems where the mist had passed with morning pearls upon its feet. To right and left, not two feet from either elbow, the bright band of bilberry that carpeted his path broke abruptly away into nothingness, a nothingness boiling with billows and tormented up-spouts of mist. In front the green carpet narrowed with every step till it became a mere foot’s breadth of lichen-covered rock.

Gascoigne was brave. He had served his country, and had been accounted valiant where courage was in the very air men

breathed. Yet unaccustomed surroundings and dizzy height may shake the nerve of the bravest. He forced himself farther along the ridge, and that way danger lay.

A sudden blast from the chasm on his left unsteadied his untrained balance. He saved himself by dropping on hands and knees. Another moment and a quick, panic run had taken him to the broad tongue where the ridge merged into the mass of the mountain. There he halted trembling and, the cold sweat running the while down his hot face, cursed his own pusillanimity. Were his nerves to cheat him of his heart's desire?

He had been hard on the slot of his quarry for nearly a week, and no longer ago than yester even had fairly harboured his deer. Nay more, he had learned his track for the morrow and had laid his plans to meet him at this precise spot, a veritable 'Pass of Archers' whereon no game might pass the hunter unscathed. The Fates had played into his hands. He had the instrument of death ready, ready to his eager fingers, ready to deal death, swifter, surer, ay, and more secret than ever a Borgia designed.

The Fates had played into his hands. The very spot seemed shaped to secure immunity for the avenger of blood: the very elements conspired to favour him. High up on those desolate heights, cut off from sight of the world below by shrouds of mist, the stroke of death would fall unseen, unknown, on the slayer of his brother. And the man once dead—the man once dead, a slight push, and the corpse would go crashing from the narrow ridge down hundreds of feet of rugged crag—to be found, a corpse, a body that had slipped and had fallen down hundreds of feet of rugged crag.

The Fates had played into his hands. All unwitting of their benign malignity, he had deemed it well to leave nothing to chance. To make assurance doubly sure, lest his weapon should fail him, he had taken with him his Browning pistol.

And this after-thought had not come to him from himself.

The squall had died down to a low rhythmical chant that seemed to carry an articulate message in its burden. Gascoigne listened.

God grant that the wish that I dare not pray

Be not that which I lust to win,

And that ever I look with my first dismay

On the face of my darling sin.

Gascoigne put his fingers to his ears.

To recover himself, to re-steel his nerve for the issue, he took from his pocket a photograph and studied it. It was that of a tall, soldierly-looking man, uniformed as an officer, dark of hair, dark of moustache. Time and again had he scanned those features. Feature by feature he had committed them to memory. He would know his man again amongst a thousand.

The squall had passed and was wailing into silence amongst distant gullies and pinnacles, and a gentle stillness had succeeded. Cautiously Gascoigne felt his way along the ridge again, and listened. From the sheer indistinctness beneath came a sound of harsh movement, the grating of nails on rock. Gascoigne turned back to the wider ground and waited.

Then, over the foot's breadth of lichen-covered rock, a man swung into vision. Tall he was and of soldierly bearing, erect and light-footed withal as a stag. Gascoigne's hand went to the breast of his jacket.

Four and five more steps took the man, and the hand was withdrawn empty. The stranger was walking bare-headed and the hair was reddish rather than dark. The upper lip, set harshly above a tight-gripped pipe, was clean shaven. The forehead was high and broad, and the eyes that had looked laughingly in the photograph from under the peak of the trench cap were keen almost to sternness. Gascoigne fancied he could detect a likeness, a feature here a feature there, but slay a man on the strength of a fancied resemblance he could not.

The stranger on his part glanced at Gascoigne curiously with a slight lift of eyebrow, hung for a moment in his pace, and then passed on upwards into the sunlight in full view of man and heaven.

Gascoigne looked after him uneasily and a similar uneasiness seemed to possess the stranger. Twice he paused, with a half-glance backward, then moved forward irresolutely. Gascoigne cursed him from his soul. With yonder witness in full view his quarry might pass him unscathed. And then again from the mist below came the scrunching of feet.

Black anger took hold on Gascoigne. He strode boldly where he had falteringly trod, resolute, at all risk, to achieve his end, in the shelter of the friendly mist, screened by the friendly rocks.

Came a sharp call of warning from above, and simultaneously from beneath, at his very feet, a startled exclamation—almost

an echo, yet too close on the other for echo. Followed a dull thud as of a falling body, the crash of rocks and the rattle of loose stones.

Gascoigne's head was going round. From below came the sound of clatter, and echo, and rattle, growing momentarily fainter, from behind the sound of hurrying feet, momentarily clearer, and from far away on the left a low hooting, momentarily more intense. And Gascoigne—Gascoigne was bending over the chasm, calling, calling for an answer that would not come.

Gascoigne had trodden the very threshold of death and his feet had wellnigh slipped. The fierce thrust of the squall, the sickening outward lurch of his body, the iron grip on his arm, the scent of the crushed bilberries on which he had been flung—all these seemed part of his being, yet infinitely remote. He who had rubbed shoulders with death during the long years of the war had looked at it for the first time—alone, squarely in the face. He caught himself wondering how it looked to others.

A voice recalled him to himself.

'What the blazes are you doing here?'

He was standing safely in the sunlight, and by him was the stranger, with light fingers still holding his sleeve. Gascoigne, still all a-daze, stammered out something about an accident.

The stranger flushed an angry red and took two steps along the ridge, then checked himself impatiently.

'That's no reason why there should be two,' he said sharply. 'In any case,' he continued, with a snap of his fingers, 'we could be of no use. Anyone who slipped on that ridge would go three hundred feet at least. Don't think me callous,' he went on. 'I yelled at you when I heard the wind coming, and what you heard was an echo. If anything did fall, it was possibly a sheep, poor beast. Anyhow, there are shepherds on the hill below, and, if there has been an accident, an efficient rescue party will be at work already. But what I meant was, what were you doing hereabouts at all? You're not a hill man, I take it?'

What had Gascoigne been doing there? What had been his object? Justice in his own eyes, murder in the eyes of the world. The first murderer was also the first liar, and Gascoigne could not tell the truth. He added to the truth:

'I read about it in a book at the inn I am at,' he explained. 'It said the ridge presented no difficulty whatever.'

'To climbers,' interposed the other with a smile. 'That is

a climbing book. Now, what may present no difficulty to a cragsman may be desperately dangerous for the man from the street.'

He nodded his head with great sagacity.

'Consequence is, you had a mighty close shave.'

Gascoigne was not interested: he was barely listening. His mind was blurred with the vision of death he had seen, and the thought of the death he carried ready to his hand, ready to be loosed at the touch of a finger. The other resumed.

'You had a mighty close shave, and you're more than a bit shaken, and no wonder. Sit down on that rock and have a swig from my flask.'

He unslung his rucksack as he spoke, Gascoigne muttering the while that he had please better not bother as he had a flask of his own: he felt for it as he spoke.

He was more than a bit shaken, more so than he knew. As he fumbled in his coat there slipped from his pocket one of those little water-pistols, quaint toys one may purchase in Holborn and elsewhere for half a crown or thereabouts. The stranger picked it up.

'Jolly wise man to come "heeled,"' he observed. 'Some of the sheep dogs round here are brutes. Nine cases out of ten if you pick up a stone, or pretend to pick up a stone, it is good enough, but in the tenth case the brute goes for you, and that's where an ammonia-pistol comes in. Now, only the other day a beast went for a lady and tore her skirt. No harm done, fortunately, as the shepherd called it off, but the poor girl had a nasty shock and,—Oh, by Jove, talk of the devil—'

Over the sky-line came a fierce, racing form. At the sight of *two* men it swerved and slackened, then swerved towards them. It was not a pure sheep dog, but a cross with some heavier breed, and there was mischief in every line.

'If I'm not mistaken,' observed the stranger, coolly, 'this is the exception that won't run for a stone. Get out, you brute.'

He shifted the toy-pistol to his left hand and made as if to pick up a stone. Instantly the dog charged, and just as it was within seizing distance, the man snapped the pistol almost against its muzzle. The dog fell as if struck by lightning.

'That'll cure it,' laughed the man, tossing the toy back to Gascoigne. 'It'll take twenty minutes to get its breath, and twenty days wondering what has happened, and it will never, never, never touch a man again.'

He cast an amused glance at the dog, then suddenly stepped up to it and knelt down. Gascoigne watched him with an ashy face.

'I say, sir,' said the stranger, with some sternness, 'I don't know what was in that pistol, but I'll stake my life it wasn't ammonia. The dog's as dead as a doornail.'

Gascoigne muttered something to the effect that a friend must have put the wrong stuff in.

'Then I should have something to say to your friend. To load up an ammonia-pistol with a charge that, so far as I can see, would kill a rhinoceros, why, it's criminal. Do you know, sir, it strikes me you're rather a dangerous person.'

Gascoigne's pallid face flushed. The man broke into a laugh.

'You are, indeed. First of all you try to kill yourself, and then you carry lethal weapons about your person. Oh, come, you don't mean to say you think I am speaking *au grand sérieux*?' Gascoigne had got to his feet with burning cheeks. The words steadied him.

'Of course not,' he answered clumsily, 'of course not. I don't know how it is: I feel a bit upset and shaken. Rather feeble, isn't it—especially after the front.'

'Not at all. Meanwhile, if you don't mind, I'll just guide you into a place of safety.' He looked at his watch. 'Not twelve yet. Time has gone quickly. All the same, my friend, I guarantee that about five minutes of it will stick in your memory for more than a good many odd years.'

Gascoigne was irresponsive. He wanted to be alone. The stranger was no fool and had the further advantage of being a gentleman. He accompanied Gascoigne 'so far,' pointed out the easiest way back to the inn, very pleasantly suggested an alternative walk in case Gascoigne should not feel disposed to return early, and strode lightly away.

And so Gascoigne was alone—alone where he would be, without the companionship of his fellow-man—and very ill company he found himself.

He was filled with a dull anger. He felt that—somehow—he had been treated like a puppet. An insolent Providence had intervened—a hot flush of shame blasted the foolish blasphemy in embryo. Anger returned, anger this time that the very desire for vengeance had by some mysterious alchemy been wiped clean from his mind—utterly expunged. A brother's blood cried to him and the will to revenge had become atrophied. Nay, more!

He recognised—and with an elation of spirit he fiercely resented—that the incentive to revenge, the motive will-power, had been lifted from his soul. Behind him, along the sky-line, the man who had but now left him with so light a step was plodding, with rounded shoulders and chin on chest, as one burdened with a burden none may see. Not that way lay the light. The sense of relief was physical, physical no less than psychical, and the cause was—no more.

Yet some half-hearted Erinyes seemed to have made him their quarry, intent on driving him forth as a fugitive and a vagabond, achieving as a result, however, at most a petulant irritation. Nevertheless, it was not till past six that he reached his hostelry. There he was greeted by his host with expressions of relief, genuine, albeit something toned by the lapse of time. There had been an accident on Gray Rib End, and the host feared the victim had been Gascoigne, more especially as he had been seen making for Gray Moor that morning. It had been since ascertained that the actual victim had been staying at the Pass Head Inn, two miles farther up the dale, but mine host was so relieved——

Gascoigne cut him short with courteous thanks, pleading as excuse that he was consumed by thirst. It was not thirst, it was a dull sense of his own futility that drove him to escape. He had been seen. He had been seen, he who fancied that the avenger of blood was immune from all possible witness of his act of justice. Verily the consummation of his scheme had in all likelihood ended in a rope round his neck.

The bar-parlour was crowded and loudly conversational. Most of those present were natives—petty farmers and so forth, but there were one or two of different class, a motor-cyclist making a passage, a neat, bronzed man with a torpedo beard, apparently a tourist, and a big clean-shaved nondescript with starched trousers. The tone of the conversation here was sinister. The accident was, of course, the main topic; but it had been decided by the locals that it was no accident, but foul play—in brief, murder. It seemed that two of the guests at the Pass Head Inn had quarrelled overnight—not publicly, but bitter recrimination had been heard in the passage. On one point there was no doubt—the taller had said he would like to break the other's neck, were it not for cheating the hangman. The following morning they had set out, one soon after another, both making for Gray Rib End, the taller starting first. The shorter had been found dead at the foot of

the End, having fallen some hundreds of feet, and of the taller no more had been seen. Consequently it was abundantly evident—

At this point Gascoigne, whose temper was by that time of the thinnest, broke in with an emphatic 'Bosh!' that made him the cynosure of neighbouring eyes. He gave a curt and lucid account of his experiences of the morning, answered one or two questions convincingly, and left. At the doorway the bearded man overtook him.

'I beg your pardon, but I'm exceedingly obliged to you,' he apologised; then rattled on, disconnectedly. 'Of course, no man in his senses pays attention to that kind of rustic chatter, but the circumstances would have been too serious to disregard it, but for what you said. That made it absolutely clear that the man they have half-hanged already over their cups could have had no hand in the accident. You see?'

'Quite,' replied Gascoigne, with a smile. 'Why, he was not within fifty yards of the place. Fifty—it would be more like—'

'Fifty feet would be enough. And now, sir,' he went on with some hesitation, 'I'm the coroner, and—of course I don't want to spoil your holiday—but—the inquest will be to-morrow and—'

'Not at all!' interrupted Gascoigne. 'Of course, I'll be there. Anything to see fair play. By the way, what was the name of the unfortunate man? I did not catch.'

'The victim?' replied the coroner. 'Blakiston. The other man, the pseudo-murderer, was called—' he paused and looked on the ground, 'was called—Oh yes, Digby. Good heavens,' he broke out, as he looked up, 'I'm awfully sorry. I had no idea you knew Blakiston.'

For Gascoigne was deadly white, and was gripping the stair-rail as if to prevent falling.

'Yes,' muttered Gascoigne, and his voice shook so that he could scarcely form the words. 'Yes. Blakiston was a friend of mine.'

And with that he tore up the stairs to hide his misery. And the cause was—not that he knew Blakiston, but that Digby was the man he had marked down to hunt to the death.

The man he had marked down. The man he, Gascoigne, had just saved from a very possible charge of murder, a charge which he, Gascoigne, was in a position to help to drive home, for he knew that bitter enmity of months standing had existed between Blakiston and Digby. Oh, the futility of it! Was he for ever to be played the puppet with? Ay, and to-morrow his lips must in

honour confirm at the inquest the acquittal of the man he had sworn to kill.

Dinner was a mockery—feeding with no relish of enjoyment, and bed a greater mockery—physical rest with no relish of repose. Over and over again the details he had laboriously pieced together forced themselves before him with remorseless monotony—the letters he had received from his brother during training for the ordeal of battle—his happy description of his new life, especially of Digby and Blakiston, his particular pals. Then the young 'un had gone to the front, the same front as Gascoigne's, albeit a hundred miles apart. Moreover, one brother was in the Gunners and the other in the Infantry.

Then came a change. Digby had gone home on leave and had come back with 'his knife into Blakiston.' Fragments of the letters flitted before Gascoigne's eyes :—'Warned me to have nothing to do with him. Like his infernal cheek. Of course, I told him to go to blazes.' Again :—'The chap's cracked a bit, dangerous, too, at that.' And again a mysterious sentence :—'Blakiston and I have formed ourselves into a mutual insurance society,' and then—no more.

And so came the Armistice, the return home, and the seeking out of Blakiston, his brother's friend.

Gascoigne gritted his teeth with impotent anger as he remembered how Blakiston had resisted the details of his brother's death being dragged from him, of the story of his bitter feud with Digby, and of how, in one of those mad rushes over the top, his brother had dropped, shot through the back, and whose was the hand that had drawn the trigger.

Then suddenly—suddenly Blakiston's self-control had given way, and he flashed into a white heat of wrath whose flame kindled Gascoigne's dull horror to fire. From that moment Blakiston became an ally of allies. Justice from man was hopeless—evidence worth the name there was none, but justice at the hand of the individual, that was not hopeless. Long had they thrashed out the problem together and, and—Gascoigne's weary, wide-awake brain could not be sure whether the suggestion had come from himself or Blakiston. Just an ammonia-pistol—not loaded with ammonia. Blakiston, he remembered—Blakiston had undertaken to supply the charge, a charge which would slay surely and leave no trace. Blakiston, in his own words, had been 'some' chemist when a youngster.

To track down Digby would not have taxed the intelligence

of a yokel. Digby was an 'Alpinist' of repute, and mountain-mad at that. Where there was anything to be climbed, there was Digby to be found in his leisure hours. The year was as yet too young for the Alps to be open, and British mountain centres are not distressingly numerous. Moreover—and this Blakiston had ascertained during the training, whilst as yet Digby and he were brothers in arms—Digby had a foible for solitary rambling. The one stipulation Blakiston made was that Gascoigne should avoid meeting Digby—a wise provision, for it is questionable whether Gascoigne could have kept his hands off the murderer's throat.

With audacious effrontery Blakiston had planted himself at the very inn to which they had traced Digby, leaving Gascoigne in ambush, as it were, at a hostelry two miles further down the pass. It was easy, by a little diplomatic chat with the landlord, to ascertain the route Digby purposed to take on the morrow; it was easy, by a study of the ordnance map and a few casual inquiries from locals, to map out a roundabout route which should secure an interview between Gascoigne and Digby, somewhere on those desolate, deserted uplands. It was simplicity itself to stroll down after supper and to post Gascoigne thoroughly as to the movements for the following day. It would have been simpler still to have warned Gascoigne that Digby had shaved his moustache, but this Blakiston had omitted to do. On so slight an oversight may hang the life of a man—and oh, the imbecile futility of the happenings!

All that night Gascoigne lay 'on the torture of the mind in restless ecstasy' of bitter memory, baffled revenge, and bitterest torment of all, of an irresistible satisfaction at failure which he strove to disown but could not.

Nevertheless, being an English gentleman, he gave his evidence as clearly and impartially as if Digby had been any every-day 'innocent third party.' 'Accidental death' was the verdict: in fact, nothing called for comment except that a Browning pistol had been found on the person of the deceased. This puzzled Gascoigne for a while, but after short reflection he came to the natural conclusion that, in view of the reported quarrel with Digby and the enmity between the two, Blakiston had thought it wise to carry some weapon of self-defence.

He was strolling meditatively down the pass when a rough voice broke in on his musing.

'Some fellows are lucky.'

Gascoigne looked up irritably. The nondescript man with

the starchy trousers was at his elbow, regarding him aggressively. Gascoigne had noticed him at the inquest, a silent witness.

'Some fellows are lucky,' the man repeated, 'and that fellow there,' jerking his head towards the inn, 'that Blakiston is one of them.'

This was brutal. In the man's presence the coroner had expressed sympathy with Gascoigne on the loss of his friend. Gascoigne was about to speak—and to the purpose, when the other held up a deprecating hand.

'One moment, Captain Gascoigne, please, one moment, and listen to me. There are a couple of sayings I should like to quote to you. The one is: "Speak no ill of the dead." I'm going to give that a miss. The other is:—"The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small." Now listen.'

He gazed steadily in the direction of Gray Moor with the air of a man arranging his thoughts. 'Hullo. There's somebody coming down hill in a hurry,' he muttered; then, collecting himself—

'Blakiston,' he began, 'was one of the most infernal scoundrels I have ever come across, and I have come across a good few. Listen!'

He took a note-book from his pocket and commenced reading extracts, punctuating the sentences with snaps of his fingers.

'Well educated—walked the hospitals—had to quit medical profession—something disreputable, but that don't matter—turned professional blood-sucker,' he left off reading. 'The number of young fellows that devil has ruined.' Then, opening the note-book: 'Tried the insurance game on and was nearly caught—no evidence. Then—by the way, Captain Gascoigne, I don't want to pain you, but if I'm not mistaken you lost a brother in the war. Have you any idea how he was killed?'

Gascoigne tried to speak, but some fetter manacled his tongue. He knew what was coming.

'Blakiston,' resumed the man, then checked himself. 'He and Blakiston came home on leave once. They insured their lives in each other's favour. Soon after their return your brother was killed—shot in the back. Do you understand now?' he ended brusquely, in a bluff endeavour to stifle his own emotion.

Gascoigne could not speak. The world for him was going round. So that was the meaning of the mutual insurance society, that was—. The man was speaking again.

'Now, "the mills of God grind slowly," as I said. The chances were all in Blakiston's favour. Who could have guessed that

one of the platoon was a clerk in that very Insurance Company and that he should have witnessed the deed? Who could have guessed that Captain Digby should have turned his head and seen it too? Digby was downed two minutes after—shrapnel, and out of action for months. Now then. Listen.'

The remark was superfluous. Gascoigne was tense.

'It was early in 1918, one of those "Nothing to report" affairs,' resumed the man with a hard laugh, 'somewhere on the scale of Diamond Hill, you know. Now Digby, as I have said, was down and out, more or less, for the time. For some reason or other he was not sent home, but treated at What's the name, that place near the French coast, you know. Then, when he was fit for leave, Foch's forward movement was just getting into swing, and at such a time a man like Digby has no use for leave or Blighty or criminal investigation.

'So much for Digby. As for the insurance clerk, he had no idea that there was another witness besides himself, and his own unsupported accusation would have got no farther than his sergeant-major, if so far, and would have brought no trouble on anybody but himself.

'Now, Blakiston did not make his claim for the insurance till after the Armistice—he had no opportunity. The Insurance Company looked up Blakiston's record and smelt something wrong. On the top of that, back comes the clerk, and no sooner did he hear the name of Blakiston than he put the Company wise to what he had seen. And on the top of that back comes Captain Digby, demobbed, and a free agent, hot on Blakiston's track. Of course we got to know all about it pretty soon, and I may tell you, sir, that, in spite of story books, when the Police take a job in hand, they are pretty thorough and pretty 'cute. I have a warrant here,' tapping his breast, 'for Blakiston's arrest, but,' he ended regretfully, 'it's out of date now.'

And with that he shook hands and tactfully left Gascoigne to himself.

That self was a storm centre of conflicting emotions, thankfulness that he had been saved from murder, a dull realisation of his own futility, and above all an overpowering desire to make a clean breast of it to Digby. He was turning back towards the Pass Head Inn with a view to making inquiries as to Digby's whereabouts, when the man himself came in sight on the roadway, travelling fast. He it was the detective had noted 'coming down hill in a hurry.'

'Hullo,' he said, recognising Gascoigne. 'So there was an accident. Heard about it this morning and came back——'

'There was,' broke in Gascoigne. 'For Heaven's sake, let's find somewhere where we can talk. There's something I must tell you. For Heaven's sake come.'

They scrambled over a wall and down a steep bank to the beck that ran beside the pass. Digby seated himself on a boulder and pulled out a pipe.

'Go ahead!' he said, in a tone of a man bracing himself to meet something unpleasant.

And Gascoigne made full confession, sparing himself in no detail.

Digby listened silent, and silent remained for near a minute after Gascoigne had finished. Then, taking his unlit pipe from his mouth, he said,

'I don't blame you—no—not a little bit.'

'Not a little bit,' he repeated. 'No cleverer devil ever came out of hell—or went back there.'

For near another minute he remained silent. Then, suddenly—

'You took a Browning pistol with you, you said?' he asked. Gascoigne assented.

'And he had one with him—a Browning was found on the body! How does that strike you?'

No answer. Gascoigne was suddenly conscious of feeling very, very tired.

'And if my body had been found with a Browning bullet in it, who would have swung for the business? Oh, yes. You were bound to have found him out sooner or later—probably sooner. First me and then you—off the map—out of the way! See? Oh, he was a clever devil.'

Gascoigne's weariness became deadly—deadly to nausea. Then he stammered out timidly—

'Did you—did you see him following you?'

Digby looked up in hot anger.

'Did I——?' Then reading innocence. 'Yes, old man, I did, and I took a difficult variant up the ridge. I thought I should choke him off following me right away. I did not want his neck broken—not that way, at least.'

Then, straightening himself up and baring his head to high heaven—

'Man,' he said, 'man—man! What puppets we are!'

CLAUDE E. BENSON.

THE ARMY PURCHASE SYSTEM AND ITS ABOLITION.

BY GENERAL THE HON. SIR NEVILLE G. LYTTTELTON,
G.C.B., G.C.V.O.

It is now not far off fifty years since the sale and purchase of commissions in the Army disappeared, and it may not be uninteresting to the present generation to learn something of the origin of the system, of how it worked, and of the causes which led to its abolition. I can speak with some knowledge, as the system was in force for the first seven years of my service, in the Rifle Brigade, and I purchased my first two steps—or, rather, my father did for me—viz. those for the rank of Ensign and Lieutenant.

Before I joined I knew nothing about the system, and it was rather a painful disillusionment when I became better informed. There were hardly any non-purchase officers in the regiment, and I saw all, good, bad, and indifferent, getting their promotion as a matter of course. No officer was passed over for inefficiency, and the only promotion for which merit was considered was that of Adjutant, and that because the comfort of the Commanding Officer depended so much on the efficiency of his Adjutant that, in his own interests, he usually selected the best man for the post. I used to envy the recruits—their prospects of getting on, unlike those of the officers, depended on their zeal and proficiency, not on mere seniority. There was, also, an uneasy misgiving in my mind as to how I, one of a family of twelve, was to find the money to purchase my way upwards.

In those days soldiering was hardly a profession at all, but an occupation—pleasant enough, but not business; and my disappointment was so great that I tried to persuade my father to let me try my fortune in New Zealand. However, he did not like the notion, so I remained on, and am very glad now that I did.

The sale of commissions was no new thing; it came into existence with the creation of a standing army, and was officially recognised so far back as 1683, in the reign of Charles II, when a warrant was issued laying down certain regulations dealing with the sums so paid and received. It is curious to note that for some time the Crown exercised absolute control over the purchase money, using a proportion of it to pay off debts and for any other purpose considered desirable. For instance, for many years

Chelsea Hospital received a shilling in the pound from both sellers and buyers of commissions. Nor was the practice confined to the Army; it was common, if not universal, in many other branches of the public service. In 1674 Sir William Temple, a prominent politician, was offered a secretaryship of state for £6000, but the deal did not materialise.

The system probably grew up in this manner. When a new regiment was required it was not necessarily raised by the State; this task was deputed to the officer who was to have the command of it, and in return for the trouble and expense incurred, he was allowed the privilege of selling commissions to the officers whom he nominated, and these on their retirement sold them to their successors. Moreover, officers who brought in a certain number of recruits were granted free commissions, which were saleable on retirement. Lieutenant-colonelcies were also acquired without purchase so recently as 1857 by officers who raised new battalions for the Indian Mutiny.

But this system was not always regarded as a matter of course; in fact, it was absolutely forbidden by William III, and it had the strong disapproval of George I, but neither the Royal prohibition nor disapproval seemed to have had any effect. At any rate, purchase continued in full swing, and in 1719 it was practically recognised by a Royal Warrant laying down a tariff of prices with conditions and restrictions. For instance, no officer under twenty years' service was allowed to sell, whether he had purchased or not, and no officer might sell any commission for which he had not paid; but it is doubtful whether these rules were ever enforced. A practice soon grew up of paying large sums in excess of the rates laid down, which no regulation seems to have prevented or restrained in the slightest degree, though several attempts of a definite and drastic character were made to check it. In the 1719 Warrant it was enacted that regulation prices only were to be paid, and this order was repeated in 1776. These prohibitions having proved fruitless, a General Order was published in 1783 under which every officer wishing to sell his commission was required to declare on his honour as an officer and a gentleman that nothing beyond the regulated price was promised or given or would be accepted, and a similar declaration had to be made by the would-be purchaser, and, moreover, the Commanding Officer had to certify that no clandestine bargain existed. It is a discreditable fact that false certificates in these matters were systematically made, and that

with the full knowledge of the highest military authorities. In 1801 an Act of Parliament was passed which made it a misdemeanour for anyone to buy or sell a commission for over the regulation price, and any officer convicted of so doing by a general court martial was to be cashiered, and the commission so forfeited was to be sold, and half the sum realised to go to the informer. Finally in 1824, all restrictive regulations having proved ineffectual, they were formally abolished and absolute free trade prevailed.

That the burden on officers was very heavy the following table will show, and it is evidence of the wealth of the class from which officers were drawn that so large a proportion of them were able to meet these demands.

In 1776 the regulation values of the various ranks was laid down as follows by a Royal Warrant:—

Rank	Cavalry £	Foot Guards £	Line £
Lieut.-Colonel . . .	4700	6700	3500
Major	3600	6300	2600
Captain	2500	3500	1500
Capt.-Lieutenant . .	1400	2600	800
Lieutenant	1150	1500	550
Ensign	1000	900	400

The high prices that prevailed in the Guards compared to those in the Line were largely due to the fact that the Guards enjoyed a special advantage in that their Ensigns ranked as Lieutenants in the Army, Lieutenants as Captains, and Captains as Lieutenant-Colonels. Under this process one of my fags at Eton became a Lieutenant-Colonel before I became a Captain.

The above table only shows regulation rates. They were considerably increased by the over-regulation prices, which varied in different regiments in a most unaccountable manner. I have known the rates as much as £2000 for a Company and as low as £400. The amount did not seem to depend on the character or reputation of the regiment in which they occurred. But whether they were high or low, when a regiment went on active service the over-regulation rate usually disappeared altogether or was very materially reduced. Nobody would be inclined to pay a large sum for a step which he might get for nothing by the death in action of a senior, which sum might be lost by a similar fatality in his own case. Of course the interest sunk in purchase

meant a considerable reduction of the officer's pay; in fact when the rates ruled high he sometimes practically served for nothing.

In 1856 it was stated in evidence before a Royal Commission by Messrs. Cox's agent that while the regulation price of a Cavalry Lieutenant-colonelcy was £6175, the usual price was £14,000, and he had known of £16,000 and even £18,000 being paid. But Lord Macaulay—see his 'Life' by Sir George Trevelyan—stated that the notorious Lord Cardigan in seven years bought himself up from Cornet to Lieutenant-Colonel in the 11th Hussars at a cost of £28,000. It is probable that some of this large sum was spent in bribing seniors to withdraw their names for purchase, thus enabling him to go over their heads. Officers appear to have been quite willing to face the considerable element of chance in these transactions both in peace and war. The death of an officer while serving in peace time involved the loss of the money he had paid for his promotions, his successor paying nothing, but acquiring purchase rights, i.e. the power to sell, all the same.

A remarkable instance of the working of the system on the outbreak of war was told me by an officer of the regiment in which it occurred. It was ordered abroad to take part in the Crimean War. There were one or two Captains in the regiment who had paid highly for their companies, the money for which they had to borrow, insuring their lives as security. They were ordered on active service; it was impossible for them to retire; the insurance premiums were largely increased for war risks, and the over-regulation value of their commissions melted away. They took the field and went through the early actions of the campaign to prove their courage, and then had to sell out for what they could get. It was practically a forced sale, by which not only the individual but the service also suffered by the loss of experienced officers at the opening of a serious campaign.

There were many curious examples of the eccentric and unequal working of purchase. To set against the huge sum paid by Lord Cardigan, I knew an Infantry Lieutenant-Colonel who, partly owing to heavy losses among his brother officers in the field, only had to purchase his Lieutenantcy, the cheapest of all his steps. Charles II. bought the command of a regiment of Guards for his illegitimate son, the Duke of Grafton, who had never served in the Army before. In 1846 there was a Majority vacant in the 24th, and the two senior Captains were father and son. The father, a veteran of nearly forty years' service, allowed

his son to purchase over his head; but two years later the son was killed in action, and the father got the Majority without purchase. There were two regiments in which the senior Lieutenants, non-purchase officers, had longer service than ten of the Captains; in another a Lieutenant had longer service than all the officers above him except the Lieutenant-Colonel. A curious but perfectly legitimate family transaction occurred in the Household Cavalry. A Captain sold out; his brother, the senior Lieutenant, purchased the troop thus vacated, and a third brother was brought in from the Line to fill the Lieutenancy. In one instance the unpopularity of a Commanding Officer with his officers was the source of considerable gain to him. They were anxious to get rid of him, and a deputation waited on him to ask him what sum he would take to sell out. He did not want to go at all, and to choke them off, demanded £17,000, a sum much in excess of the usual price; but to his disgust this offer was promptly accepted, as was the further demand for guineas instead of pounds.

As regards jobbery and favouritism, it is quite clear that in the old days purchase did little or nothing to prevent them, if it did not actually encourage them. Many flagrant instances could be quoted. Lord Combermere got command of a cavalry regiment at 21, the Duke of Wellington of an infantry battalion at 24. Infants of both sexes often held commissions—Sir John Fitzgerald, afterwards a Field-Marshal, joined his regiment in the Peninsula as a Captain at 16, his earlier steps presumably having been won while he was still in the nursery or the schoolroom. No doubt in the case of the Duke of Wellington, the system may be said to have been vindicated. He had the enormous advantage of attaining high command in the field when in the prime of life, and physically able to stand any stress, and many of the Generals serving under him had the same advantage. Sir Edward Hamley has an interesting comment as to how his career might have been affected under ordinary conditions.

‘Had he been the son of an obscure gentleman he might and probably would, with all his genius, have served in India as a subaltern, in the Peninsula in various regimental grades, and might have died, perhaps a barrack-master or half-pay Lieutenant-Colonel with half a dozen clasps. . . . The best arguments that can be adduced in favour of a system of promotion in the army by money or interest are, first, that amid a thousand of inferior men who have thus a field opened for them while still young enough to traverse it, there may

be one Wellesley ; and, secondly, that it is next to impossible to devise any means by which amid a crowd of subordinate officers, whose duties only demand ordinary capacity and attention, pre-eminent merit of a different and higher kind shall be certain to obtain recognition.'

The evils of the system did not altogether escape notice—there is on record a most crushing indictment of it in a letter from Major-General Craig, Adjutant-General of the Forces under the Duke of York in the Flanders campaign of 1794.

'There is not a young man in the Army that cares one farthing whether his Commanding Officer, his Brigadier or the Commander-in-Chief himself approves of his conduct or not. His promotion depends not on their smiles or frowns, his friends can give him £1000, with which he goes to the auction room in Charles Street, and in a fortnight he becomes a Captain. Out of the fifteen regiments of cavalry and twenty-six of infantry which we have here, twenty-one are literally commanded by boys or idiots. I had the curiosity to count them over.'

This must be an over-statement. The British Army in Flanders showed over and over again that it was not the helpless mob it must have been had General Craig's description been strictly accurate, but still it is remarkable that such an opinion should have been recorded by a competent authority, and it must be feared that he had some grounds for his sweeping denunciation.

The triumphant issue of our struggle with Napoleon was calculated to inspire the belief that no drastic alteration was called for in the military machine that had accomplished so much, and so long as the Duke of Wellington lived no such alterations were made. He was the embodiment of Conservatism in the literal sense of the word, and as Commander-in-Chief his strength was to sit still ; and it may be gravely doubted whether under his control our Army did not go backward instead of forward. There was in some quarters an uneasy doubt that all was not well with it, but very little was done to improve matters either in training, organisation, or armament. Among other things the purchase system, although occasionally tinkered at, was accepted more or less as a matter of course.

But the Crimean War revealed that there were many weak points in our methods, and in 1856 the purchase system was subjected to investigation by a Royal Commission under the

Presidency of the Duke of Somerset, and the following extract from their report is a concise summing up of the opinion which they formed.

'The purchase system was vicious in principle . . . inconsistent with the honour of the military profession . . . irreconcilable with justice. Under such regulations . . . an officer who performed his routine duties, and who keeps a sum of money available to purchase his promotion as opportunities offer, may look forward with confidence to the attainment of high military rank. . . . The officer will find that knowledge of military science and attention to regimental duties do not avail him unless he is able to buy the rank to which his qualifications entitle him.'

Stress was laid on the fact that the command of a regiment was an important trust, and yet that it was often exercised by officers admittedly unequal to the duties of command, that purchase restricted the number of those from whom officers could be obtained, that it deadened emulation and eagerness to acquire military knowledge, and that it rendered men eligible for the highest commands without taking any security that they were fitted for such a position. It is no wonder, viewing the large sums of money at stake, that the military authorities were very reluctant to penalise officers either by debarring them from promotion, however unfit they had been for it, or by removing them from their posts—as either penalty meant heavy pecuniary loss. The consequence practically was that everyone who had the money got promotion as a matter of course. No doubt there were confidential reports on officers as to their fitness for promotion, but it is to be feared there was little guidance in them. I had in my own time considerable experience of these reports as a Military Secretary, and even in those days the reports were too often uniformly favourable, and in earlier times they were certainly more so. There was a notorious case nearly sixty years ago when the military authorities did harden their hearts and did pass over an officer in the Guards for battalion command. It is too lengthy a story to go into here, but if anyone wishes to know the details he should look up the Dawkins case, which about the year 1864 got into the Law Courts and was thrashed out thoroughly.

Holding the views quoted above, it is strange that the Commissioners did not recommend any more drastic remedy than that the rank of Lieut.-Colonel should not be purchasable. This,

though accepted by the Government, was not carried out, and it was not until 1870 that the question was really grappled with, when another Royal Commission was appointed by Mr. Cardwell to inquire into over-regulation payments. This Report was generally on the same lines as that issued by the 1856 Commission, in calling attention to the flagrant abuses which prevailed under the system. It pointed out that the practice of over-regulation payment was notorious, that there had been no attempt to stop it, that it had been tacitly acquiesced in, in fact virtually recognised. It had been strictly prohibited both by law and regulation, but the most explicit prohibition and the most stringent regulations had entirely failed to prevent or to check it.

The startling and unexpected results of the Franco-Prussian War, which broke out just as this Report was received, greatly strengthened the hands of Army reformers. It began to be realised, as Mr. Cardwell said, that 'If there is one lesson that we have learnt from the history of the late campaign it is this—that the secret of Prussian success has been more owing to the professional education of the officers than to any other cause to which it can be ascribed.' No vested rights based on money transactions existed in that army; promotion to staff appointments and to the higher ranks was made by selection, merit was the test and it got a fair field. With us promotion was in practice based on pure seniority, coupled with the ability to pay a large sum of money, and until this practice was done away with, selection or even rejection was virtually impossible.

It cannot be said that public opinion was exactly enthusiastic in support of Army reform, but it was prepared to support the Government in its endeavour to put things on a sounder footing. A spirit of reform was in the air, and in 1871 Mr. Cardwell brought in a comprehensive measure in which the abolition of purchase was included. The Bill prohibited the sale of commissions after a certain date, compensation was given to officers holding saleable commissions, who were to receive both the regulation and over-regulation values out of monies provided by Government. The main point was that 'No officer was to be placed in a worse position as to the commission he then held in respect to either regulation or customary prices.'

It might have been expected that a scheme which relieved the officers of a mortgage of eight million pounds, or £320,000 a year, would have been warmly welcomed by those whom it was intended

to benefit, but if Mr. Cardwell had any such expectations he must have been grievously disappointed. Nearly the whole body of officers was up in arms against the measure, and they were aided and abetted by society at large. Innate conservatism was at the bottom of this feeling—it was honestly believed that no good thing could come out of a Liberal Government. There was a story current in those days that at a regimental dinner an old General laid down that all reforms however salutary were to be deprecated, and there were many who shared this view. It is not unlikely, too, that the love of a gamble inherent in so many of us had something to do with the popularity of purchase. The prizes were fairly numerous, some of them very valuable, and everybody hoped to win one. The measure was complicated and not fully understood, and there was a genuine belief that financial rights were being tampered with. These misapprehensions might have been justified had there been any intention of not refunding the over-regulation money, as was indeed demanded by ultra-reformers, but the recognition of the practice by the highest authority made it impossible to refuse repayment, nor does it appear to have ever been contemplated by Mr. Cardwell.

The opposition to the Bill in the Commons was obstinate, not to say factious, nor was it confined to the Conservative benches. The advantages of purchase were loudly insisted upon—it stimulated promotion, it discouraged favouritism and jobbery, it was economical in that it obviated the necessity of a large non-effective vote. This last claim was more or less true—the sale of his commission was the ordinary provision for an officer who wished to retire, and this cost the public nothing, in fact officers paid their own pensions. Sir John Pakington, an ex-First Lord of the Admiralty, advocated purchase so warmly that he laid himself open to the sarcastic enquiry why he had not introduced it into the Navy. It was contended that the regimental system would be destroyed under which 'officers were all members of one family, all spent their lives together, all desired to be commanders not of any Regiment but of their own.' No doubt this was very often the case, but that it was not invariable was proved by the fact that at that time there were fifty-two Generals serving who had been in more than one regiment, one in no less than nine. Inflated estimates of the cost of the measure were current, some authorities placing it as high as forty million pounds. It really amounted to seven millions only.

It was demanded that payment in full was to be made at once, as it was not fair that purchase officers should be serving on unequal terms side by side with those who had paid nothing. As a matter of fact inequality of this sort already existed in the case of those who had been lucky enough to succeed to non-purchase vacancies. It was actually asserted that all purchase officers had a right to promotion, which virtually meant that the Army was the property, not of the nation, but of the officers.

The Government proposals were really very liberal. They secured to every officer on leaving his regiment the over-regulation value of his commission, though that value might have been liable to considerable reduction in the event of war or service in an unhealthy climate. There was no haggling about the payment, which was made at once out of public funds. As regards the claim that purchase stimulated and accelerated promotion, this was only the case with those who could afford the money, the chances of the impecunious were delayed or even destroyed. Lieutenants of over twenty years' service were not unknown, the most notorious case perhaps being that of Sir Henry Havelock of Lucknow fame, who was twenty-three years a Subaltern. As a matter of fact, promotion, taking it all round, became more rapid and more equally distributed.

The opposition to the Bill was acrimonious and prolonged, and had it not been for the wise counsels of Mr. Disraeli it seems very probable that it would not have got through the Commons that Session. However, it was carried in July by substantial majorities, though not by the full strength of the Liberal Party, several of whom—Lord Elcho, Colonel Anson, and Mr. Bernal Osborne with other weak-kneed supporters of the Government—were strenuously opposed to it.

But its troubles were by no means over: if such^r had been the difficulties in the green tree of a Liberal House of Commons, what might they not be in the dry tree of a Conservative House of Lords? The attitude of that body was speedily manifested. The Bill was read a first time on July 4, but the second reading, moved on the 13th by Lord Northbrook, Under-Secretary for War, was met by an amendment by the Duke of Richmond to postpone the Bill until a thorough investigation into its provisions had been made either by the Government or another Royal Commission. This was pretty strong—the whole Bill had been discussed *ad nauseam* in the House of Commons after the purchase system had been laboriously investigated in 1856 and 1870 by Royal Commissions, and it was evident that the intention was to get rid of the Bill by a process of

procrastination. In vain Lord Derby, a prominent Conservative leader, advised that the system should be got rid of at once, while public opinion was favourable to a fair and liberal settlement, and while it could be done without any wrong or injustice to any individual or class. Equally disregarded was the opinion of the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief, who considered the offer of the House of Commons to be very liberal, adding 'that he did not see that by making the proposed change they would be doing anything calculated to lower the tone of the British Army.' There were many retired officers in the House of Lords, all of whom opposed the Bill with more or less vehemence, with the notable exceptions of Lord Longford and Lord Sandhurst. It may be said in partial justification of their action that they were only following the example of the Duke of Wellington, Lord Raglan, Lord Panmure and other high military authorities who had all strongly advocated purchase before previous Royal Commissions. The amendment was carried by 155 to 130, the Conservative Party being reinforced by a few Liberals, including Lord Russell and Lord Grey.

The *Times* newspaper, not a thick-and-thin supporter of the Ministry, summed up the situation as follows: 'The Lords have prevented the Government doing justice to the officer and it is bound to prevent further creation of costly interests by illegal transactions.' Mr. Gladstone entirely accepted this view, especially as he had to hand an easy method of passing over the ill-advised action of the Lords. It had already been pointed out by Lord Derby that purchase could be abolished by Royal Warrant without the intervention of Parliament, and this was the course which the Government determined to follow. On the face of it this appeared to be rather a high-handed proceeding, of which even Radical supporters of the Government disapproved as being an exercise of the Royal Prerogative. But the public at large had made up their minds that purchase ought to be abolished and did not much care how it was done.

Accordingly a Royal Warrant was issued and signed by the Queen on July 20, cancelling all regulations fixing the prices of commissions from November 1, 1871. This action was vehemently opposed in both Houses, but in vain. It is possible that a hint of Mr. Cardwell's that he might stop the payment of over-regulation money by putting the law in force had something to do with the final passing of the Bill. An announcement by Mr. Gladstone that there was no intention of going back on the undertaking to indemnify the officers which had already passed the Commons, and

it was therefore unnecessary to refer the Bill to that House again, had some effect. The second reading was brought on again in the House of Lords, where it met with no further opposition, and it finally passed through both Houses before the end of the session. The Lords, however, consoled themselves by passing a vote of censure on the Government on the same night that the Bill was read the second time.

It seems very probable that if the dilatory action of the Lords had been successful the abolition of purchase would have been postponed for several years, for if the Commission proposed by the Opposition had been appointed it would not have reported in less than two years, and by that time the popularity of the Government had waned, their forces were more or less expended, and they would have found it very difficult to pass so contentious a measure through Parliament before 1874, when they were turned out of office. But it was fortunate for the officers that the Bill passed when it did. Liberal Parliaments of a more advanced character might not have treated them with so much consideration as that of 1868 did, and the over-regulation money would perhaps not have been paid in full, or even at all.

The passing of the Bill did not altogether silence its opponents; certain complaints of individual hardship were brought forward, and in 1873 these grievances were investigated by a strong Commission under the presidency of Lord James. To some extent these complaints were recognised, but the Commission did not consider them traceable to the abolition of purchase, but rather to irregularities and ill-luck which could hardly have been foreseen. Some recommendations to meet these cases were made, and the right of exchange, which had been seriously curtailed, was again permitted with slight restrictions, and the complainants were pacified. In fact, they only asked for investigation, and declared 'they would be satisfied with whatever the nation chose to decide for them,' and to all appearance this was carried out. It was remarkable how rapidly after the Bill had passed and come into effect the opposition to its provisions calmed down, and when in, I think, 1881 a liberal scale of pensions and an equitable system of retirement came into force, as corollaries of Mr. Cardwell's great measure, I doubt if any appreciable number of officers serving would have been in favour of reverting to the old order of things.

In 1892 a Report on the operation of the Act by Mr. O'Dowd, one of the Army Purchase Commissioners, was published, in which

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the results of the operations of the Act were set forth. He stated that the object of the Act had been 'to give to every officer the full value at the time of retirement of the commission then held, at the same time and to the same amount as if the privilege of selling to his juniors had not been taken away. In cases of doubt, the doubt should be resolved in his favour.' Since then complaints of the purchase officer have not been altogether unknown—one came to my notice not very long ago—but they have been neither serious nor frequent.

In fact, few, if any, of the doleful predictions as to the dire results which the abolition of purchase would bring about have been fulfilled. The rate of promotion was not injuriously affected; on the contrary, it was accelerated. The old Captain of forty or even thirty years' service had disappeared. The new regulation, that no Lieut.-Colonel may remain in command of his battalion after fifty-five, effectually prevents the recurrence of what happened in the Crimea, when two battalions were commanded by officers who had served in the Peninsula more than forty years before. An incompetent officer can now be got rid of without inflicting upon him a heavy pecuniary fine. Jobbery and favouritism have not been nearly so rife as they used to be, selection—or perhaps it would be more correct to call it rejection—has been on the whole carried out fairly and successfully, and, best of all, money is no longer the *sine quâ non* for promotion. The officer has a far more direct stimulus to study his profession, and he knows that if he wants to get on he must put his back into his work. Nor has the type of officer deteriorated. Speaking from long experience, regimental and on the staff, my opinion is that it has improved.

I wonder how the purchase system would have worked if it had been in operation during the late war. It would certainly have disappeared for the time—the risks of death were so great that few, if any, officers would have been disposed to pay either regulation or over-regulation prices, but I imagine that purchase rights, though in abeyance, would have remained, and dealing with them would have been a very big business.

I have by no means dealt with all the ramifications of purchase: if anyone wishes for further information I refer him to 'Lord Cardwell at the War Office,' a book written by the late General Sir Robert Biddulph, who was private secretary to that great statesman when he carried out his far-reaching reforms, to which book I have been much indebted in writing this paper.

WITH THE MOLYBDENITE MINERS.

THERE is a tract of land within the Empire which is probably the richest in mineral wealth on the earth's surface. Its vast treasure store is free to all who care to unlock the door and obey the simple laws which govern the country. Life is pleasant and free from the burden attached to civilisation, yet one can assume those burdens—and enjoy all they yield in exchange—by a day's journey to the coast, or to any centre of population. That tract of land stretches across the neck of the Cape York Peninsula and is in North Queensland. The writer knows from experience that most minerals of value exist in that tableland, and if any metallic substance were suddenly to become in demand, which he does not already know, he would go there to look for it with every confidence in his finding it.

The country itself is different from all other parts of the world, and its people are also possessed of several strange characteristics. The land surface is a jumbled mass of lime bluffs, granite blows, and iron-stone hills, all covered from base to summit with ti-trees, 'quinine,' and other bush scrub, amongst which rise tall cedar trees, all varieties of gum or eucalyptus trees, and, near water, palms of various kinds. The people, who live a nomadic life amidst such surroundings, wresting gold, silver, tin, lead, molybdenite, wolfram, and other materials of unknown name from where nature placed them, are a happy-go-lucky lot of men gathered from all parts of the world, and of all callings, originally. Whatever they may have been in the past, and their previous joys and sorrows, are forgotten in this great upside-down land of almost untouched wealth. Its trackless depths of bush, hiding unknown possibilities, seem to cast a glamour over all men once they have experienced the delightful gamble of a day's work amidst its mineral-laden outcrops and gullies.

And to the prospector every day is a gamble, in which he puts his time and labour against his chances of striking a reef of gold or molybdenite or something else which will afford him all his requirements for the rest of his life. So he thinks while under the spell of the country, but usually, when he has stumbled across something good, the desire for wealth becomes secondary to the

lure of the still unknown, and he will leave his sure modest fortune, after only replenishing his exchequer, and wander on again in the hope of finding some reef still more promising. The prospector lives in a mystical land of promise—but seldom stops long enough for fulfilment. He may reap a partial reward, and then, news reaching him of some new mineral having been found elsewhere, he packs up and steers for the latest land of promise—where he will probably work hard developing a ‘prospect’ much poorer than the one he left.

Sometimes a man may leave the great northland of Queensland; memories of former associations will flit through his dream visions, a war may break out, or a girl of his youthful days call him, but he does not stay long away. An irresistible power recalls him, and sooner or later he gravitates back to that part of Queensland which lies inside Capricorn. He finds the country the same as when he left it, and the people with whom he fraternises unchanged in nature. Labour troubles may have arisen in new townships built on the site of what was once his own domain, but that merely pushes him further out, for the genuine prospector is his own master. New minerals may have been discovered, some old ones may have become more valuable, some famous camps and townships may have been deserted and the tracks which once led to them overgrown with long spear grass. But he meets one or two old friends at the railway terminus who soon put him in touch with the latest developments, and after that, as speedily as a horse or other means of travel can enable him, he joins up once more with the nearest band of fortune-seekers.

Recently, molybdenite has been greatly sought after by these men, that mineral having become of great value owing to the many uses for it found during the war. Some time ago it was passed by as not worth mining, but now most prospectors have abandoned the search for gold, copper, tin, and gem stones to seek for that flaky pearly-grey mineral, and camp and tiny townships are rapidly springing up everywhere.

Molybdenite is a combination of the metal molybdenum and sulphur, and is represented by the formula MoS_2 . It is used for hardening steel and for rendering it rustless and non-oxidisable. It is also in great demand for the making of high explosives, for the manufacture of valuable dyes, and for a variety of purposes known only to the Japanese and to other people who keep its uses secret. The Germans were aware of its great value in some directions

before the war, but now most people possess all the knowledge they had, and probably the Sheffield steel makers know a great deal more.

But those who make the 'getting' of it their present profession know little of its uses and care less. It is easily mined, has a high price and a waiting and ever-growing market, and in such a country of sunshine as North Queensland, he would be hard to please who wanted more. Molybdenite is found almost everywhere throughout the plateau, which stretches between the coastal ranges and the Gulf of Carpentaria. It occurs in quartz reefs in the form of thin flakes, which fall out when the rock is broken, and in veins or fissures in the quartz running downwards into the ground at various angles. In those lodes the mineral is more compact and is often found in solid masses, completely filling the small veins which permeate the ore body. The miners think that those veins or 'stringers' either feed into or lead out of some larger body of mineral far down under constant water-level, and there are indications which seem to prove that this idea is correct. But molybdenite miners, as they are to-day, are not keen on hard work, and have little intention of sinking deep shafts to prove any theory, however rich the reward might be, when they can so easily obtain all their requirements practically on the surface. Besides, deep sinking would mean developing a mine, and that would entail their staying longer in one place than would suit their irresponsible but freedom-loving natures, and also carry with it the necessity of conforming with mining laws, the use of machinery, and, in time, perhaps paying rent and taxes. They therefore break off from the surface outcrops all the richer material and, sometimes, sink a shallow shaft to enable them to tunnel underneath the length of the mineralised part of the 'strike' or surface length of ore showing, and after excavating what they have thus 'blocked out,' they move on to pastures new. The molybdenite seekers like the companionship of their fellows, and although two men usually work a 'show' together, there are invariably many other couples working near, and round the camp fires at night they meet and discuss events of importance, and criticise freely the world's various Presidents, Premiers, and Parliaments.

A fellow prospector and myself worked a claim near the Tate River, about twenty miles south of the mining township of Chillagoe on the Cairns railway. Another ten men also worked within a few hundred yards around, and perhaps another score were within a mile radius. We were all pleased with our prospects, and broke out

molybdenite with little effort, which we intended to send away when our combined collections justified the use of horses and a waggon.

Big Sam, my companion, was one of the best-known prospectors in North Queensland. In fact, he was known fairly well on most mining fields of the world, and his knowledge of minerals and gem stones was more than is found in any text-book. He and I had been together before, and I knew his ways well. He had made a fortune several times, but somehow had always contrived to lose it—a peculiarity not the sole possession of Sam. Our neighbours, a hundred yards down the same outcrop on our right, were Parson Joe and Old Tom, and on our left, Black Bill, who was an ex-stock-broker, and Scotty worked and played at getting all the molybdenite they could. Among the others near were a doctor, an ex-banker, and two who had been members of some Australian Parliament, known amongst us as Peter and Paul, although they really had other names. The remaining two were ordinary and, presumably, honest miners who had not yet distinguished themselves sufficiently to deserve any names but their own, and those, they said, were Tremain and Smith. They were the hardest workers, however, and usually showed results about double that of any other couple.

Big Sam and I had ideas of our own as to the best way of working, and so had all the others. Ours was to follow the main ore body in an 'underlie' shaft sunk through the richest part and at whatever angle it happened to dip. This was not the professional mining method, but we reasoned that, as molybdenite did not behave as other minerals in its mode of occurrence, we would suit ourselves to it until we knew more about its peculiarities. Our shaft soon became more like a corkscrew than anything else, but as we thus kept in the heart of the richest ore and no labour was unproductive, we thought we were more than compensated for our slower downward progress and the extra trouble in hauling the ore to the surface. Some of the others drove a shaft down at the average angle of the dipping lode, and certainly got down faster and with less hauling labour; but as they were sometimes working in a barren zone, and had to raise all excavated material just the same, I think we had the best return for our work.

Of course, if the ore at any depth became more defined our shaft would be very inefficient, but we had no guarantee that our zigzag moving material would ever settle into a defined formation, and if it did we could with full confidence start another shaft to cut it at the most suitable depth. Meanwhile, we were not trying to develop a mine, but only to get as much molybdenite as possible

to send for sale in time to provide funds for a fair-sized gamble in connexion with the Melbourne Cup. Some may have wanted money for other purposes, but beyond Parson Joe's expressed desire to have some money to give to the Bush Brotherhood, the religious society which he represented, and my own intention of getting a portable oil-winding engine, no one seemed to have any other use for money.

At length we decided we had enough first-class ore to make a good 'parcel,' and we employed a couple of Chillagoe teamsters to cart it to the railway, whence it would be sent about fifty miles down the line to the Government Reduction Works. During the next week we left our shafts alone and spent the time selecting the ore we had raised. The best only was considered worth the trouble and cost of transport and treatment, and each mine soon had heaps of hand-picked ore, measuring four feet in length and width and five feet in height, piled up neatly beside its shaft. Each of those was estimated to contain five tons, and all were of the same grade, as far as I could judge. I made a rough assay and found that the molybdenite contents were about $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and as there were in all twenty heaps, of which Big Sam and I had contributed four, and Messrs. Tremain and Smith six, we calculated that a nice little cheque round about a thousand pounds would soon reach us.

While the teamsters were making, between them, six journeys a week with five ton loads, we turned our attention to the ore we had discarded, and broke up with hammers as much as possible. This action set free all the larger flakes contained, and those we collected and bagged, throwing the partly broken ore aside after it had shed them. This ore still contained innumerable minute specks of molybdenite which could not be extracted unless by a crushing battery and treatment plant, and it would not pay to send it away as we had done the first-class ore, the cost being more than it would return. We had about three hundred tons of discarded material, which we estimated contained about 0.5 per cent., or £600 worth, if we had had our own treatment plant. However, as we bagged, collectively, over a ton of solid metallic flakes from the lot, we felt we had done well enough. We sent the bags of pure molybdenite direct to the buying agents in Cairns and by return mail received a cheque for £380 for them. But alas! when, later, the return for our first-class stuff came from the Government Works, it only amounted to £450, and the parrots around the camp that night must have heard many words which puzzled them. Peter and Paul were furious. Tremain

and Smith thought they would join some trade union and, through it, make the Government resign. The rest added nothing edifying to the discussion, except words expressive of deep feeling. Next day we decided that it paid us better to break all our ore ourselves and save only the pure flakes, which we could sell direct without further treatment, or the trouble and cost of heavy freight.

During the next week most of us worked very hard tearing out all the ore showing in the sides of our shafts, thus spoiling them for further sinking, and breaking all the quartz along the entire outcrop. Tremain and Smith continued going down into the heart of Queensland, however, and in about ten days announced that they had struck water and that their ore body was opening out and becoming solid. We wished them good luck and went on shattering our raised stone and collecting the flakes, and when the result of the Cup was known had amassed another two tons of the pure mineral. Incidentally, we lost all we had speculated on the great Melbourne event, but Parson Joe, who had taken four ten-shilling tickets in Tattersalls instead, won fifty pounds.

The rainy season had now started and the grass was springing up everywhere, affording 'feed' for our horses, and making it easy to travel away from permanent water. We knew too, from some Aborigines who hung round our camp for the sake of food, that several big 'blows' of quartz existed away to the West, and pieces of rock which the natives had occasionally brought in from them looked very promising. Thus, one night when the tropical rain fell, as someone said, like the Barron Falls, and we had gathered under a bark shelter Peter and Paul had erected, Old Tom broke into some general conversation with the remark:

'Boys, I am tired of this place, I've been four months here, an' I have never been so long anywhere. I reckon I'll take root if I wait longer, so I'm going to see what lies beyond that range.'

'And where Old Tom goes, I go,' said Parson Joe. 'I'm off duty for a year, and I hear that some men have already moved west. Perhaps a township may form there and I may be of service.'

'I don't mind seeing what those blows the natives talk about are like,' put in Black Bill, 'but I think we might float a Limited Company down south to take over this place first. With a capital sufficient to provide pumps and a stamp battery we might, by retaining half the shares, make a fortune—'

Scotty interrupted Bill by flinging a burning log at him, and for some minutes no one spoke, and the tobacco smoke hung in a dense cloud over all. Finally Tremain began. 'We've gone in

for deep sinking,' he said, 'our show is good and will likely be better. I'm a Cornishman, and I stick to what I know; we're not leaving here.'

'But unless you are willing to send your ore to the Government Battery for treatment,' I said, 'you can't do much more here. All the surface levels have been worked out, and deep sinking requires machinery and some form of power.'

'We'll get that, and a treatment plant too, if we want it,' put in Smith. 'Anyhow we are staying; we are not here for fun.'

Somehow, after hearing Tremain and Smith, the matter seemed to be decided, and next morning all the others got in their horses and packed up their few belongings. In the afternoon Big Sam led the pilgrimage westward, and, leaving about a thousand tons of broken ore containing perhaps nearly 1 per cent. molybdenite behind, we followed. Tremain and Smith wished us luck, but I fancied seemed glad we were going. Before sundown we had crossed the scrub-covered range, and were about to camp for the night at the base of a lime bluff which seemed suddenly to have jumped up two hundred feet into the air from nowhere, when Scotty thought he saw the quartz formation we were looking for gleaming in the setting sunlight just ahead. He was correct, as we proved ten minutes later, but we were not the first to find it out. About twenty men had already staked off what they fancied to be the best part of the outcrop, and having finished their day's work, were now engaged cooking at their various camps. Big Sam and I knew some of them, and probably Old Tom and Scotty were acquainted with them all. They welcomed us in true bush fashion, helped us to erect a couple of tents to shelter us from the rain for the night, and divided us amongst them as their guests for supper. Afterwards, we gathered round the common camp fire under a bark shelter and exchanged news. They had been there only a week, and had previously been members of several camps.

'We'll have the biggest township in the north here, soon,' said one known as the Mayor, because he had at one time been the Mayor of some coastal town. 'The *Move on* feeling only begins to affect decent fellows like ourselves when the rainy season starts, and it has a long time to go yet.'

'We are now twenty-eight of a population, and two Chinamen,' announced someone. 'I'll bet we'll number a hundred before long.' He was correct.

Next day Big Sam and I pegged out our ground where the outcrop was cut by a creek. Most of the claim-holders advised us against doing so, as there was nothing showing on the surface. We

thought we knew a little bit more than the others, however, and rightly calculated to uncover the cap of the lode just underneath, in a line between the two points of the ridge outcropping on either side of the creek. Our old companions took up claims where they fancied along the line, and there were gaps left which any new-comer could take with equal chances of striking payable molybdenite. This camp was already known as Lightown (for some reason I have not been able to discover molybdenite is known locally as 'lig') and was too big to send away its products pooled. As a result, an enterprising teamster found regular employment carting the picked ores from the various claims to the nearest railway point, where a siding was soon built. He got none of ours however, nor from the new men. We thought we could teach the others one or two things, and, including the Mayor and one or two friends, we formed a little syndicate to treat our own products. We purchased in Cairns a suction gas plant and two small rock crushers, which we erected crudely on the creek on the ground held by Sam and myself. I was appointed to superintend the work of running the plant and the treatment of the ore, Black Bill was honorary business manager, and all hands had to utilise their spare time in burning charcoal to provide the gas plant with fuel. Of course, almost every man outside our special combine had ideas of his own for the saving of the precious lig, and some of them were certainly original. The actual getting of molybdenite was fairly easy, and now, secondary to its extraction, and in furtherance of our schemes of independence of the Government treatment plant so far away, we constructed a dam across the creek with a sluice gate at the bottom capable of adjustment to suit the inflow. Some additional Chinamen arriving in the camp utilised the water from the higher level created to irrigate some ground adjoining, and as a result the camp was soon revelling in the luxury of fresh vegetables which, under the Chinamen's magical hands, grew like mushrooms. But my idea of the dam was not conceived to assist vegetable production, although the stews made by Ah Sin, one of the gardeners whom Big Sam and I had engaged as our cook, were certainly events to be remembered. The dam was part of an ambitious scheme by which we hoped to save the extra half per cent. or so left in our discarded ore. The complete plan was not all mine. Every man knew or had heard of the principle of the 'flotation of metals,' and every man had ideas of his own whereby that system of extraction could be applied. Our ideas were pooled, criticised, discarded or improved upon. Experiments eliminated all that were, although perhaps

correct according to science, not possible of application in our case, and a month later this is what happened regularly: The partners of any 'show' who belonged to our syndicate—and others if they cared—carted their ore to our rock breakers, which ran constantly. They fed their ore through the first, which broke the quartz to pieces of about an inch in size, and then passed the result through the second, which crushed down everything until it could pass through an eight to the inch sieve. This could have been more easily and perhaps more efficiently done by a stamp battery or set of grinding rolls, but we were not professional engineers, nor did we care to erect heavy machinery on concrete bases which could not be readily removed, and which, according to law, would necessitate our employing skilled artificers to work, and thus bring us under Government and trade union supervision.

The crushers were erected higher up the creek than the dam, and the pulverised ore was discharged from the second machine into the creek, a part of the bed of which was lined with a bark channel removed from the trees with which we made charcoal. A ten gallon tank of kerosene or other cheap oil was fitted so that it could feed minute drops over the ore as it was swirled down to the dam, and we interrupted the water's passage with a sieve so as to ensure the ore and the oil coming in contact somewhere. The particles of molybdenite, by reason of some law much discussed but, so far as I know, not yet fully understood, clung to the oil and when they reached the comparatively smooth surface of the dam floated with the oil, while the rest of the material sank and escaped through the sluice. The dam was always kept gently overflowing into the bark channels which supplied the Chinamen's gardens, and into those the black frothing mass of molybdenite and oil eventually found its way, where it was trapped and collected on a very fine sieve which allowed only the water and extremely fine grains to pass. Lower down another sieve collected what had passed the first, and it was only water that eventually reached the Chinamen. The saved mineral was removed at intervals and dried on a hot iron plate; a lighted match flung on the mass set fire to the kerosene still present, and, finally, we bagged the result in suitably lined sacks, and sent them off, when opportunity offered, to the buying agents at Cairns.

We were well pleased with our work, and I regretted only that our plant was not of a capacity to treat all our ore irrespective of its mineral value. As it was, our crushers could not deal with the

average quartz, and were used only for ore of the best quality, and hundreds of tons had therefore to remain untouched.

Before the end of the rainy season the camp had grown into a township. The high value of the molybdenite and the fame of our treatment plant had attracted men from all parts, although most of the outside workers were compelled to send their ore to the Government Battery, or save only the flakes which they liberated by breaking with the hand. Parson Joe got a hall erected, which was used for all purposes. Someone opened a store, galvanised iron houses took the place of tents, and finally a post office was instituted in what had now become the main street. A good road was cut to the railway, and women began to arrive to supervise their husbands. Commercial travellers soon found that Ligtown was a profitable calling place, and one day a Government Mining Inspector came off the coach that now plied to and from the railway. His visit meant trouble, for we conformed with no mining laws, unless accidentally. Anyhow, a town was no place for a prospector, and the *move-on* feeling had come on again. The rain had now ceased for the year and our creek had stopped flowing, and although we might have contrived to pump water from some distance to keep our plant working, stacked the ore until next season, or sent it to the Government Battery, we didn't.

The day after the Government Inspector arrived nearly all the original prospectors left the field and scattered in parties to wander where their fancies led them. The Mayor took over our plant in trust for us ; but, of course, it was useless without flowing water.

Peter and Paul, Black Bill, Big Sam and I moved back only to the big lime bluffs, to work some gold show one of the Chinamen had located there, but two days later the Inspector drove up with the Mayor and showed such an interest in our new discovery that we could see a rush would set in when he made his report, and this we did not like. We had made our camp in an enormous cave recently discovered in the heart of the lime bluff and some day meant to explore its vast unknown depths ; still, we couldn't very well lose the Government man in it, as Black Bill suggested, for he was a decent fellow and I had known him before he had become an Inspector.

Therefore, the next day we left the Mayor and him there with one or two Government satellites who had followed the great man, and moved on again. We rode past our first camp, now all overgrown with long grass, and found Tremain and Smith enjoying a

smoke at the top of their shaft. They were doing exceedingly well, they informed us, and were pumping water out of their shaft with steam power. I suddenly had a desire to halt there, the idea occurring to me that their discharging water could run our late plant remarkably well, and by building a dam we could successfully treat all the old ore already on the surface. I think Big Sam read my thoughts, for he remarked, casually, to the couple: 'Well, I reckon you'd better close down for a bit. There's a Government Mining Inspector over at Ligtown, and he'll raise trouble when he finds you using a steam boiler without a ticketed man in charge.'

Smith said he thought he knew as much about boilers as any Government man, and both partners said they would take their chances of trouble, and we passed on.

We spent about a week sampling reefs here and there, finding promising molybdenite almost everywhere, and often finding wolfram and tin in fairly rich patches. Copper, too, was in evidence in massive blows of copper carbonate, but we had no desire to start mining on any scale with its attendant worries. We could deal with molybdenite, and its price was sufficiently high to make its pursuit the most attractive. But one day we struck the railway, and a strange feeling seemed to come over all.

'We're only four miles from Lappa Station,' remarked Paul reflectively, as we halted.

'I got a letter before we left Ligtown asking me to stand again for my old district this coming election,' said Peter. 'The Cairns train goes to-morrow morning.'

'I think I could raise a lot of money in Melbourne to work some deep level propositions,' put in Black Bill. 'I haven't been in a city for two years.'

Big Sam laughed, and I hurriedly completed my map of the various reefs we had located, linking all up with our present position on the railway, as shown by a rail milepost. Nothing more was said, but half an hour later we were alongside the building at Lappa station which alleged itself to be an hotel.

Next morning we disposed of our horses and boarded the coast-bound train. We were going to have a look at the sea, if nothing more. The first stopping place down the line was that monopolised by the Government Reduction Plant, and as the train drew up we saw its manager, whom we all knew, standing on the platform. We got out to have a word with him, but he was first.

'What have you fellows done with old H——?' he inquired,

coming forward. 'He hasn't come back down the line yet, and he didn't expect the cave to take him more than a day or two.'

'We left when he arrived,' Big Sam replied. 'We didn't want to be worried with fussy Mining Inspectors.'

'But H—— didn't go out to Ligtown to cause trouble over mining laws. The Government wants molybdenite too badly for that. He went out to report on that wonderful new cave you've got out there.'

We looked at each other thoughtfully.

'Well, anyhow, decent fellows can never be sure of Government people,' Sam went on. 'What about that ore we sent you from our first camp?'

'I was just going to ask you about that. We sent you a cheque for half its estimated value, in advance, as per Government instructions, and the other cheque for the balance, due when it was sold, is ready for you now. I am sorry for the delay, but you are the gainers as we got a higher price.'

Again we were very thoughtful.

'Just send that cheque along to Parson Joe,' Peter said, as the train whistled, 'he'll keep it in trust.'

When we got into Cairns that night Peter, Paul and Black Bill went straight on board the *Aramac*, which was lying alongside the wharf ready to sail for Brisbane and the South. Our farewells were short, for instinctively we knew we should all meet again. Big Sam and I adjourned to an hotel, where we dined, and then sat on the balcony looking out over the sea.

'I wonder what's doing in Sydney now?' spoke Sam after a long silence.

'Not much, but the climate in parts of England and Scotland is very fine in the summer time,' I said.

Sam nodded.

'The Government people were not so bad after all,' he ventured after another reflective silence.

I nodded, and at that moment the *Aramac's* preliminary warning whistle sounded.

'The train goes back up the line to-morrow,' he said.

'And the *Aramac* goes to-night,' I said.

'Let's toss——'

A coin spun into the air, and—— we caught the *Aramac*.

ROBERT M. MACDONALD.

FOUR CORNERS TO MY BED.

I WONDER if that verse beginning 'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Bless the bed that I lie on,' is ever, nowadays, given to small children as a dessert to their evening prayers?

I learnt the words seated in the lap of Sarah, the cook, in front of the back-kitchen fire of that old Norfolk vicarage to which, at the age of five, I was sent from my London home. There was a front kitchen, I remember, a bakehouse and scullery too, but the back kitchen was always the scene of my evening devotions.

The lines troubled me. After Sarah had tucked me up for the night, and blown out the candle, the watching angels at the four corners of my bed were very frightening; and what of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, would they come also if I asked God to send them? I often wondered what effect the blessing of my bed by the four evangelists would have on it, would it make it smooth and warm as were the sheets when Sarah ironed them?

To tell the truth I did not at all want these nocturnal visitors. Indeed, so frightened was I at the prospect of their appearance that with all the subtlety of which I was capable I strove to leave the prayer unsaid. But Sarah was firm. 'Don't be a little heathen' was her injunction, and the threat of no snuggle over the kitchen fire compelled obedience.

I was tubbed in the kitchen and in a real tub, too, the wood of which was soft and satinlike from constant use. And then to sit on Sarah's lap, with my head resting against her ample bosom, the fierce fire burning my toes, so that at last I had to tuck them under me, such a feeling of perfect happiness could not be forgone even if it meant a reluctant calling on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But when I was in bed and alone, then fear shook me, and I would cover my head with the bed-clothes to the point of suffocation so as not to see or be seen of them.

But Sarah had left and her lap knew me no more, alas! before those four evangelists *really* troubled me. 'The butcher took her!' That was the bald announcement that explained my friend's departure. Often had I watched the butcher unpack his basket of naked meat and deposit our joint on the kitchen table—here, then, was fresh cause for wonder and for fear. Gertrude, the daughter of the house, six years my senior, read my thoughts. 'Why, of

course she's cut up by now,' she explained and, as my lip fell, she added: 'Great baby! Do be a man.' From the moment of my arrival at her parents' home Gertrude had set herself the task of making a man of me.

Sarah's last words to me I was never able to forget. 'Be sure you say your prayers properly and don't forget your pretty little verse.' I did not forget it, but I withheld it from the next hearer of my supplications. As ever with me, disobedience was fraught with danger and punishment followed quickly.

But there was a sin of commission to be added to my sin of omission before the punishment actually fell. . . . Family reasons had despatched me (like a pup selected—'we are sending you this one') to that land of reeds and rivers and broad-waters, where bitterns boomed, and herons skimmed the roof and fished in the dykes of the vicarage garden. To me, who had known but the back garden of a London house and had thought Primrose Hill the country, the garden was a new world, and its giant shrubberies dark and mysterious forests, needing, on my part, much bravery to explore. The garden, with lawns which disappeared in reed-beds and hovering quaking-grounds, where otters barked at night and tench burrowed in black mud, was to me a land of delight. In patches of turned-up peat celery and peas thrived wondrously; 'swallow-tails' in the flower-beds drank from gorgeous petunias, sunflowers, sweet-peas, and old-fashioned cluster roses; and in that border of self-sown mignonette which encircled the whole house the bees were never silent. The garden possessed two clattering wooden windmills whose pumping kept us comparatively dry till the floods made vain their efforts. Then they stood up to their middles in those miles of water on to which the windows of the house so often looked—the river swallowed by the floods.

The river was my wonder. From my nursery window I could see it coming from afar, sweeping in a bend about us, then going on through a flat country to a distant horizon. It had been early dinned into my ears that never, *never*, under the fear of God, was I to go near the river. The river, they told me, was a dangerous, treacherous thing, ever ready to suck little boys into depths from which there was no return. That is to say, if they ventured to its edges by themselves; accompanied, the river had less chance of showing its sinister power.

Even Gertrude was forbidden to go to the water's edge. She treated this command with contempt, and when I watched her

disobedience and saw that no harm came of it, I wondered if, like so many other things in life, the river was as black as it was painted.

One afternoon soon after Sarah's departure I lay in the sun under the mulberry-tree, idly warming my small self. My eyes blinked as I watched the sparkling river, and the whole garden in which I had to play was as a desert compared to the jewelled waters that called me so persistently. I was alone—the blinds in the front of the house were drawn for the sun, and Gertrude was busy saying her Latin lesson to Octavius, her father, in his study. Only yesterday I had been given a fishing-rod and had received my first lesson in catching perch from the safety of the large, green-painted vicarage boat. There were, I knew, still worms in the can, and perch, I had been told, loved sun. My power of resistance snapped. I slipped into the house and obtained my rod and with the can of worms disappeared into forbidden territory. It was a prickly walk along a straight-cut *rond*, with a deep dyke on either side, but I reached the river in safety. I kept as far from the edge as my rod would allow, for though I had overcome the fear of disobedience the evil reports of the river were still uppermost in my mind.

After the initial difficulty of baiting the hook I made a cast and shortly my float started to bob and run hither and thither. Presently, with a heart soaring with joy, I landed a quite five-inch perch. No easy task was it to extract the hook which the fish had taken far into its interior, and I was engrossed in the operation when there came the sound of rushing waters and the report of a sail, gybing. A wherry glided by. Meeting it from the opposite quarter came another wherry, sail down and a man quanting, and as the wherries passed the quanting man shouted out: 'There yer go, bor.'

'There yer go,' sang out the other, and then came the question: 'What freight ha yer, yer look wunnerful light?'

'Ah! I got a freight yer never heerd tell on. I ha got Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Jack aboard. That's a rum un, that be.'

In a moment the fishing was forgotten—the familiar names fell as a thunder-clap upon my ears. I could not have been dreaming. No, for the man repeated with a chuckle:

'Yes, I ha got Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Jack aboard, that be true as Gorspel.'

Was it possible that retribution could come so swiftly? I took a hurried glance at the wherry and I saw that the man had desisted from his quanting and, with foot on tiller, was steering his craft close to the shore. I looked in vain for the passengers; ah! they must be

in the little cabin. Perhaps, perhaps, they had not yet seen me, and I clutched my rod, fish, and can, and raced to the lawn, and as I ran I glanced over my shoulder and saw to my consternation that the wherry had entered our boathouse dyke and the man was busy making fast for the landing of his freight. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were coming to me, to me who, ever since Sarah had left, had tried to forget their existence. Was it because I had flouted them by my negligence or because of my disobedience that they were paying me this visit? Unconsciously I followed the example of my first parents and I hid from judgment in the thickest and darkest shrubbery.

At tea-time I dared ask no questions as to this arrival of which my elders seemed in ignorance. I decided to avoid lawn and river for the rest of the evening, and having nothing better to do I wandered into that portion of the garden known as the 'pightle,' where luscious gooseberries grew. These fruits, for reasons stomachic, were only allowed when counted and given—I must confess, however that I had many a time fed undetected, and any pain caused had to be borne as the Spartan boy bore his fox. Evening was passing into twilight, dew was falling, and large snails were making slimy tracks on the path, the while I fed on those overripe monsters which burst when bitten into and flooded the mouth with most delicious juice. So intent was I that I forgot it was past my bedtime, forgot, too, the wherry and its contents and my fears of the afternoon, when I heard footsteps coming up the path and a voice calling me.

There was a gap in the hedge, a means of egress that had served me before, which led into the churchyard, whence I could stroll back into the stableyard, innocence written all over me. I was through the gap like a rabbit. A line of horse-chestnuts made the shade denser than I had anticipated, and I severely stung my legs with the nettles of the ditch. Looking backwards I reached the beaten path that led to the vestry door and came out into the blue twilight. Already the stable gate was in view and I was safe from discovery. Then I chanced to turn my head.

My feet were rooted to the ground; a cold sweat ran down my spine; I tried to scream but no sound would come; fear held me. Close to me stood four colossal men, white-clothed, their heads uplifted, hands held up in prayer. They were silent, and so still that not even their nightgowns moved—it was this awful stillness that made my teeth chatter. They were twice, no, nearly thrice, as big as I, and I had run into them unwittingly. I would

have known who they were even if the wherryman had not spoken; how often had I pictured them by my bedside—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John! In one moment they would drop those upraised hands and have me in their clutch.

I dared not pass through them, so, trembling, I retreated. With pent-up screams released I fled back through the nettles, through the gap in the hedge, past the gooseberry trees, right into the presence of my, for-the-time, guardian, whom, because of my tender age, I was allowed to call Granny. With a shriek I buried my head in her petticoats, seeking protection. . . .

Whether Granny thought my, to her, unaccountable fears were punishment enough for eating gooseberries without authority I do not remember. But what I do remember was the awfulness of the moment when my candle was extinguished and I was left alone with the knowledge that those white figures of the churchyard might at any moment be about my bed. I was terrified of the supernatural—ghosts, churchyard walkers, as Sarah called them, and *Shuck*-dogs. I had often heard these things discussed in whispers in the kitchen. Though not intended for my ears, I would listen, pricked with fear, and then sometimes sleepless in

‘ . . . the silent of the night,

The time when screech-owls cry, and ban-dogs howl,
And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves,’—

I would get out of my bed and lie flat on the ground, pretending to be dead, for had I not heard that ghosts never touch dead people? But this counterfeit would not serve me to-night, for these were not ghosts; these were people sent from God, God who could always see what naughty, disobedient little boys were doing. I did not seek the protection of the floor, but I lay still, wondering if the hands would soon be feeling for me beneath the bed-clothes—for me, the little heathen.

I awoke next morning to a wet day and a world of terrible fears. True, I had not been visited in the night, but that might only mean that the new arrivals were biding their time. I was extremely good all day, looking at picture-books, or at the river, as changed in aspect as the world was changed to me.

By evening the rain ceased and I crept out into the stableyard. The stableyard was bounded by the two wings of the house and

stables, by the fence and gate leading to the pightle, and by the hedge of the churchyard. In the middle of the yard was an enormous kennel, inhabited by a retriever dog, so fierce that none save Octavius ever fed him, loosed him, or went within reach of his chain. Naturally I was not allowed near the dog, and even the valiant Gertrude, who dared most things, kept her distance from the guardian of this lonely vicarage.

There were other kennels in the yard, small green ones, to which were attached with chains and collars Gertrude's three cats, kennelled till the young pheasants could fly. As I slipped into the yard the cats were sitting on the tops of their houses, complacently washing their faces, and I strolled over and stroked Peter, the black one, who had obligingly eaten the evidence of my guilt of yesterday, and who at sight of me, and hopeful of another dinner, ceased his ablutions and sat up and purred.

I left the cat and was walking listlessly round the yard when I was brought up by grim reality. My blood froze, for just topping the churchyard hedge were the heads of the four evangelists. So it was as I had expected, they *were* biding their time—in another half-hour it would be bedtime again. To hide as I had hid the afternoon before was my first impulse, but I wanted protection as well as concealment, and I turned and ran, not to the back kitchen door, no, I wanted greater security than that could give me, but as fast as my legs would carry me I raced across the yard and dived straight into Rock's kennel. There came a growl, long and loud as a roll of thunder, and I experienced a terrible sense of airlessness and suffocation. Then the dog uncurled himself and, recovering from his surprise, thrust his nose into my face and smelt me. He lay down, as did I, in the dust at the far end of the kennel.

Rock was fed on oatmeal, mixed with the boiled juice of greaves, and the aroma from a seldom-loosed dog thus fed was appalling. The remembrance of that smell is fresher in my mind to-day than the fear that drove me to so desperate an act. But I was safe! Rock seemed to enter into the spirit of the trust I had placed in him, for he put his head outside the kennel and with mutterings as of thunder made the roof of his home vibrate, and ceased only when he was convinced that no one was about. After all, better to sleep with Rock's odorous protection than in that dreaded bedroom alone. And so from the warmth of the dog's body and the complacent feeling of safety I fell into a comfortable doze.

Deep growls awoke me, and voices calling, and the blinking of

the lantern that made criss-cross bars of light fall into the mouth of my sanctuary. Then I heard—

‘Why, the child must be in Rock’s kennel, his straw hat is outside. Good heavens! I hope the dog has not killed him. Octavius, Octavius, come at once.’

Octavius came. Now, if there was one person at the vicarage I feared more than another it was Octavius. He was short, stout, and strong. Hawklike eyes had Octavius that looked out from under a thatch of eyebrows. No mealy-mouthed vicar, he spoke with authority, and worlds, or our world, trembled at his bidding.

Octavius quieted Rock, who was straining at his chain and barking furiously at the commotion. As I feared Octavius far more than I feared Rock my last feint for safety lay in pretence of sleep. Lantern in hand the vicar bent himself double, thrust an arm into the kennel, and drew me forth. From his somewhat ungentle handling Granny retrieved me, and in her relief that I was safe and without a scratch she did not think to scold.

‘How wonderful is the sagacity of a dog, even a fierce brute like Rock would not hurt a little child,’ said Granny, as she carried me to the house.

‘The boy stinks like a polecat,’ said Octavius. ‘Tub him, wash his head,’ and he shut his study door with a bang. That night, to my joy, Granny bore me to her bed and I slept there.

Many times the next day I was asked why I had gone into Rock’s kennel. I fenced with the question, no power should tear from me the awful secret of the churchyard. I still hoped that time would weary those four watchers and that they would depart as they had come. From the nursery windows I could see the painted mast, and vane with flag on it, of the wherry that had brought them; surely the skipper would not be content to wait much longer; soon the evangelists would give up their quest and return by water to God. I hung near the skirts of Granny all the morning, climbing after her the four steep wooden stairs to the storeroom whose glazed window obtained its light from the seldom used front kitchen. The many-shelved room smelt of coffee and spices and other dry goods; here candied peel was kept, and many a bit came my way that morning. I heard asides and whispers: ‘I can’t think what have come to the child, one would say he had been frightened.’

That afternoon I watched, with sinking heart, Granny in a dolman, bead-fringed, descend the front staircase, best bonnet on her head. Octavius had previously roared from the hall that the dog-

cart was at the door, and this, I knew, meant a drive to the city. Norwich was fourteen miles away, and I feared that there was no hope of their return till after my bedtime. I stood in the hall, alone with the cases of stuffed birds, watching them disappear, when down the winding banisters slid Gertrude.

'Phew! young ferret,' she said, pretending I still smelt, 'now I'm going to make a man of you; come into the churchyard and I will show you something.'

I made a dive down the hall to seek safety in the kitchen, but she caught me by the hand and began to drag me to the open door. I struggled with all the strength of my six years for I knew her intentions—I was to be taken to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The prospect terrified me, and I begged and implored for mercy; but no, she was obdurate, I was to be made a man of. She was strong, too, and dragged my stiffened body along the ground.

In this undignified fashion were we proceeding towards the church when, in desperation, I wriggled my body round and fastened my teeth into her wrist.

'You are a little ferret,' she yelled, as she let go her hold to suck the wound. I did not wait. I was off with a bound and I ran as I had never run before. I went down the drive, for, like a hunted animal, I was making for open country. Then I heard what I most dreaded: Gertrude had caught up her stilts.

Ofttimes Gertrude chased me on stilts, though her legs were long and she could run fast. On stilts she would take enormous strides and would turn about and cut capers in the air. On stilts she was a veritable 'Spring-heel Jack,' no longer Gertrude, daughter of the vicarage, my playmate and tormentor, but some awful monster, invested with powers of progression which were terrifying to an unduly nervous child. Now, as I ran I could hear the plug-plug-plug of her long strides behind me. I dived through a hedge into a turnip field, hoping the thorns would check her, but not a bit of it, this obstruction was taken in a stride. I went on, across the field and through another hedge—on the softer ground my panting, distraught self gained a little. Ahead of me I saw a haystack and I sought its shelter. It was a cut stack, sliced like a cake, with a narrow platform on the top, where the thatch had been removed for the next cutting, and against the stack stood a ladder.

I looked round. Gertrude was still half a field away, and as the ladder was at the back of the stack she would not see me if I climbed up it and concealed myself in the litter on top. It was a perilous

journey, for the rungs were far apart and I had never climbed a ladder before. But fear drove me up and, panting, I dived into the litter—and waited.

Alas, I had underestimated Gertrude's hunting instincts. She came straight to the stack and to the ladder. 'Now,' she called, 'I will teach you to bite when I want to make a man of you. You've got up there; all right, you shall stay there till I come to fetch you away,' and with this she reared up the ladder and flung it to the ground.

I answered her not. All I felt for the moment was relief at having escaped her clutches. Presently I should be able to slide down, so I lay where I was amongst the loose hay and watched her mount her stilts and stalk off.

It was only when I ventured out and looked over the abyss that I realised how I had been trapped. It was like looking over a sheer cliff and there was no possibility of climbing down. Only to look made me feel dizzy, to jump the twenty feet was altogether beyond my powers.

From my vantage point I had a grand view of the surrounding country. I saw the near church and the roof of the tree-fringed vicarage; the house, isolated on its little eminence, with not a farm or cottage within call, stood midway between the upper and lower streets of its village, a mile from either. The low sun was glowing on farmlands, the burnished river, waving reeds, marsh lands, studded with windmills and the black sails of wherries. I could see our reed boathouse and, sight to gladden my eyes, on the wherry belonging to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the man was cranking up the sail. Soon the wind filled it and the wherry drew out into the river. I watched her go. Though I had no evidence, I was sure her passengers were gone with her, perhaps they had other duties to attend to, other children to correct; perhaps God expected them back by a certain hour. Often I had wondered where the river ended. Now from my elevation I could see it running into the horizon, water meeting sky; of course, the river was the highway to heaven, it ended at God's feet. . . .

By now it was tea-time and I was hungry. Sick and sorry I crept back into the hole that I had made; how long would Gertrude keep me here? Perhaps, being of a forgetful nature, she might leave me here for ever. Before me loomed the prospect of starvation, yet all the time I could hear Rock barking in the stableyard.

(Something of what I feared really did happen. Soon after Gertrude's return to the house a girl friend arrived in a pony cart and asked her to drive back to tea, and the unexpected excitement banished all thoughts of me from her head.)

I shouted with all the lung power I could command, but no one heard. The fields were empty of workers ; presently the sun went down, clouds boiled up and covered the evening sky and it began to rain. Gradually grief, hunger, and fear were overcome by exhaustion, and as I had curled myself up in the kennel so I curled myself up in the hay and fell asleep.

Looking back on this episode I am always overcome with self-pity. It seems monstrous that so small and helpless a morsel of humanity should have been exposed to what must have been mental as well as bodily torture, but I do not think self-pity has a place in a child's mind. I believe all I was conscious of at the moment were physical discomforts—cold, hunger, dread ; I was just *lost*. I wanted my Granny's arms round me, the warmth of her body, the protection of her presence ; I wanted the assurance of the everyday things that I understood and recognised. Sleep played the part of comforter, and I awoke to voices beneath me and Gertrude ascending the ladder from out the night.

I was helped down to a group of scared servants who for hours had been scouring the countryside. My Granny, just returned from Norwich, stood among them.

'Thank God ! Till this naughty girl returned we were afraid you had gone to the river and were drowned,' were the words that greeted me. It was a subdued Gertrude who brought up the rear of the procession that stumbled home across the turnips. At the house door Granny turned to Gertrude :

'As for you, you shall be punished, whipped,' I heard her say. 'Understand, once and for all, I will not have the poor little fellow teased by you.'

In the light of the hall lamp I saw Gertrude put out her tongue at me. But as we crossed the threshold she touched my hand and whispered : 'Poor little ferret ! I clean forgot you.' Somehow, I was not blaming Gertrude, indeed I admired the unconcerned air with which she went to her doom. I knew, and she knew, what she was about to receive.

It was decreed next morning that I *must* have a cold and I was kept in bed till tea-time. I listened to strange noises in the churchyard, men coming and going, the shouting of orders, and the rattling

of chains. It seemed to me the voices were both on the ground and high up in the air and I could not guess what movement was afoot, but the constant coming and going between house and church produced a pleasant feeling of safety and confirmed me in my belief that the evangelists had returned to God. After tea I slipped away to the scullery door and, taking my courage in my hands, I ventured across the stableyard and peeped through the gate. The figures were gone, the path they had occupied was empty—I was saved. With me to this moment remains the sensation of the ecstatic joy with which I skipped back across the yard. I had learnt my lesson, and never, never again would I tempt the fates by fishing in forbidden waters. But being shortly 'made a man of' by Gertrude my resolutions vanished with my fears.

That evening for a treat I was allowed to sit up beyond my usual bed hour. Gertrude, I learnt, was still in durance vile, but I was so happy in the vanishing of my troubles that there was no room in my heart for animosity towards her. I was engaged in looking at pictures by the light of the study lamp when Rock set up a furious barking, and there came a loud rapping on the French window which the parishioners used as ingress to their pastor's presence.

Octavius rose from his chair to unhasp the window, and there entered a man I knew, a dealer in pigs, who also acted as carrier to and from Norwich. The man was shaking with fear, and for a moment was unable to speak; the catch in his breath told that he had been running hard.

'What on earth's the matter, Beavis; you look as if you'd seen the devil,' said Octavius.

'Don't know as I hain't,' stammered the man. 'Thought, yer Raverence, as I'd better come and tell yer. I wor driven' up here with a parcel; it be bright munelight, bright as day, and—there be something on the church tower.'

As fire to thatch so fear catches fear. That 'something!'—had they returned? With eyes starting from my head I waited for more. Beavis went on: 'When I fust saw 'em I thought that wor four owd harnsers' asetten' up there. I knowed better as I got nigher.'

'Well, what you do think they are?' the vicar inquired.

Beavis hesitated for a moment as if ashamed to speak. But fear, and the peasant's love of the horrible, gripped him, and in a hoarse voice he answered:

¹ Herons.

'Why, there's four graveyard walkers got up there, Master; 'clare to Gawd 'tis true, and in their white grave-clothes and all. Come and see for yarself.'

Octavius threw himself back in his chair and roared with laughter. Not so I; I was shaking all over with fright.

At last the vicar spoke. 'Why, you silly fool, Beavis, haven't you heard? Those are stone images of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. A lady has presented them to the church, and they came by wherry three days ago and were placed in position to-day.'

'Well, I never heerd tell of such a thing,' said an indignant Beavis. 'I've been away driven' bullock tother side o' Norwich the last few days and ain't heerd narthen' about 'em. What they put on tower for?'

'As an ornament and a landmark. To help beautify God's house. They are quite new—cut out of solid stone. No doubt they looked white in the moonlight just now, but they will soon get weathered. Anyone else who is scared, please tell him that they are only four stone figures of—well—call them the four *apostles*.'

'Porsels yer call 'em,' said the man, backing out of the door. 'They gave me right a tarn they did—porsels! landmarks! I reckon lady had far better given us a gude wane, that would ha' told us something. Porsels,' he repeated as he left the study.

To me this information came as a surprise and a relief. So they had been stone *apostles* all the time, not the real ones. But even now that the terror was explained away I wished they had not been presented to the church, as from their place of vantage they could watch me all over the garden. I decided that it would be wiser again to repeat their verse, so at prayers that night, my hands folded in Granny's lap, to her astonishment I ended my 'Please God bless Granny, bless Gertrude,' etc., etc., with—

'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the bed I lies on.
Four corners ter my bed,
Four angels be there spread;
One ter watch,
One ter pray,
Tew ter bear my soul away.'

'Bless the child!' exclaimed Granny, 'whatever will your Mother think to hear you talk such broad Norfolk?' I think my pronunciation impressed her far more than my piety. But that

was the verse as I had had it from Sarah's lips, and till I left Norfolk, in less than a year, I never once omitted it from my prayers. It was better to be on the safe side. If I asked them to come they wouldn't, if I didn't ask them they might. Things are often like that in life. . . .

They still stand, those four stone figures, at the corners of their tower, as once I believed their prototypes might stand at the corners of my bed. They see the ever-returning glory of the river banks in summer, those wild herbaceous borders of loosestrife, willow-herb, hemp, agrimony, and great white convolvulus, and, in winter, the golden reed, candle-rush, and gladden, through which pass the black-sail wherries, carrying their freights.

A year ago I climbed the stairs of the tower. I felt I should like an interview with the 'porsels,' it was such a long time since we first met. Many vicars have come and gone since Octavius; families of children have been reared in the old house, have played in its garden, undisturbed by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, whose sepulchral whiteness has been mellowed by a lifetime. I scraped moss from between the folds of 'Jack's' robes—there was lichen on his head; no longer by the most imaginative could they be taken for 'churchyard walkers,' and as guardians of the 'pightle' gooseberries they would no longer count. Absorbed into the grey of the stone about them they have become mere pinnacles to the battlements of the tower.

They remain but a landmark, not even known as 'porsels' by the present generation of skippers and wherry-men who glide past them on the river. But no less devout than I remember it, is the uplift of their hands in prayer. They may be a landmark, I doubt their being an ornament, for on renewing their acquaintance I was shocked to see how they had aged—they might have belonged to the church for all time. And as I examined their weather-beaten countenances a thought rushed into my brain, a thought terrible and poignant, so that I shivered as when first I had met them on the ground—was not I six years their senior? The answer was indeed frightening. Again I left them hurriedly, and I must own that after descending the hundred or more steps of their tower my knees trembled as of yore.

CHARLES FIELDING MARSH.

BERLIN: AT THE PLAY.

GERHARD HAUPTMANN's drama 'Die Weber' (The Weavers) was, when I was in Berlin recently, being played nightly to full houses in Reinhardt's big theatre, the Grosses Schauspielhaus. The combination is an interesting one. 'Die Weber' is on the way to becoming a classic; it has in any event great historical importance. It is not thirty years ago that it appeared, the first ripe fruit of the naturalistic spirit in German drama. Naturally enough, it was not agreeable to Authority. Its representation was forbidden; and the Chief of Police gave vent to an aphorism which has become almost as classical as the play itself: 'The whole tendency doesn't suit me'—'Die ganze Richtung passt mir nicht.' (*In parenthesis*, what an excellent contrast between Prussia and England, that while the methods in both countries were superannuated, the censorship in Germany was exercised by the powerful and unpleasant Chief of Police, that in Great Britain was vested in the meaningless and—*quâ* censorship—comic office of Lord Chamberlain.)

'Die ganze Richtung passt mir nicht.' The play, after such a dictum, was naturally well advertised; and so, by a combination of merit and circumstance, it became famous.

Nothing could better mark the lapse of years, or rather the vast change that has been wrought since its publication, than its presentation on the boards of Reinhardt's theatre.

Thirty years ago such a place would have been unthinkable; even now it must be seen to be believed. It is a monument to all the original tendencies in modern Germany. It is as far removed from anything traditional in architecture or decoration as any skyscraper in New York, but in a wholly new direction. The two have this much in common, that they are both the outcome of modern nationalism, with its huge states and overgrown cities, of the rise of a great middle-class public, compulsorily educated, but in the line of no long tradition—hard-working, but living in changeable times, where, instead of an appointed niche for each worker, there is a shifting struggle.

Reinhardt's playhouse was originally a big circus, lying in a not very attractive quarter, much shut in by houses. The main front is one huge low gable, light red in colour like all the rest of the building;

it is traversed from top to bottom by long narrow panels—simplified pilasters if you will. It is the interior, however, which takes one's breath. The central auditorium is formed of a large, much-flattened dome, from which seats spread out and back. The seats, as is natural in a circus, are all arranged in one vast horseshoe, ascending slowly to the sides and rear. There is visible neither profusion of the sham baroque or rococo decoration that the builders of theatres generally assume is beloved of the public, nor the somewhat negative restraint which is the usual rebellion against this senseless vulgarity; but a flowing of creative energy into new channels. The dome consists of a series of narrowing rings; and each ring has a circle of pendants, like the teeth of a gigantic circular comb, reaching down the three or four feet of its height. The whole, consisting of light-grey plaster, seems like a forest of stalactites ordered by the hand of man. Where the seats stretch beyond the dome the low ceiling is again of plaster, roughened with some scraping instrument, and lit by the reflected light of small invisible lamps in a crack at the junction of ceiling and wall. The stage is a wide oblong at the base of the dome's flat farther wall, whose upper part is all painted a plain red, with one central decoration of simple dark red stuff. In the corridors again, no gilt mirrors, nor crimson plush sofas, nor insipid pictures. Everything is bare—circular passages, arched and pillared. Only the lighting gives the place its peculiar and disquieting character. The main pillars are coloured in simple terra-cotta, or blue, or yellow, and fluted with narrow vertical flutings. They rise into a series of vase- or flower-like expansions, all alike, and each springing from the one below. In the free lip of each of these inverted bells are placed the lights, again invisible from below. The effect is disquieting, because it begins to be barbaric; on the other hand it is reassuring, because it has a look of natural growth, and there is no disharmony. There are places immortalised in the 'Arabian Nights' which might have looked thus.

Hauptmann's play is mainly original as a revolt against the old tradition; it is tradition's complement—can only be understood relatively to it. The Grosses Schauspielhaus has nothing to do with tradition, either positively or negatively; you may like it or you may detest it, it remains at least something new, a free expression of the creative spirit. It was perhaps this contrast that lent the play a classic mantle.

The present age sees in it, no less than in Shakespeare or the

Greek tragic drama (Reinhardt's favourite material), the picture of another and past epoch.

The play deals with the Silesian weavers in the middle of last century. It is the early time of Capital's rise, of the building of factories, the introduction of machinery. The weavers still work with the hand-loom in their own homes, weaving what they spin themselves. But the capitalists' status has been changing; from living on free-and-easy terms with the weavers they have become a rich caste, apart and separate, to whom the common people are weaving-machines rather than fellow-creatures. Hard times are in the district; trade depression and competition are hitting the owners, and the weavers see famine close before them or even in the house.

The plot is simple enough; one could say that there is no plot, but simply a train of events. In the first act we see the weavers bringing their products to the warehouse, grumbling at their pay, begging piteously but in vain for an advance; we see the cold, impersonal relation of the owner to his weaverfolk. In the second we find a weaver's home—poverty and simplicity breaking out under the pressure of bitter need into tears, curses, and at the last rebellion. At the close one of the young men, one who has travelled and can read and write, brings out of his pocket a song, composed no one knows by whom, a bitter attack on the factory-owner and the capitalist. The young men take up the song, and march round the streets singing it in procession; there is a fine scene where they invade the inn. Later there is shown the factory-owner's drawing-room—the cold but blustering owner, his plebeian wife, ashamed and afraid of her former fellows, the enthusiastic young tutor, the village pastor and his wife. Noises without—the chief of police—an arrest—finally an assault by the mob, the ignominious flight of the family, and a wonderful moment where the common people come into the room, timid at first, then inquisitive—contemptuous—angry—violent. The curtain descends on an orgy of destruction.

The third act is played in the cottage of another weaver, an old and pious man. Young weavers come in, recruiting for more attacks on other owners. There is a struggle between the old weaver and his son, who at last, goaded by his wife's taunts, flings himself out of the room to join the bands.

There is an alarm of troops. All run out to see; only the old man and his half-blind, paralysed old wife are left, she sitting full

of foreboding by the fire, he steadily weaving. There are shots; a great uproar; more shots. A stray shot enters the window and strikes the old weaver; he falls forward, dead, over his loom. The little granddaughter runs back, excited at what she has seen; she begins to tell her grandfather of the troops, the volley, the way some men fell down. But he doesn't answer. She goes up to him. 'Grandfather.' No answer. 'Grandfather.' Again no answer. The third time, in a fright, she calls; begins to cry. The grandmother too realises that something is wrong. The whole place is charged with terror. The curtain descends.

It is not a play in the ordinary sense of the word; nor an epic. It is a slice of life adapted to the stage. It is moving, interesting, often dramatic; but it is not a drama. Like so many realistic plays, it asks questions and leaves them unanswered. Galsworthy often and Shaw sometimes give the same feeling—an uncomfortable incompleteness. Hauptmann does not translate life into terms of satire or farce or pure comedy. He does not face misery and death in the catharsis of real tragedy. No; he gives a dramatic presentation of some of the problems of real life—those problems that are never solved but by being converted into a fresh set of difficulties. The realistic drama was a necessary protest; but it is only a stepping-stone to any true dramatic art.

And so out. The pillars seemed to uphold the corridors with fans of light; the passages were thronged with German bourgeois and bourgeois—the women especially remarkable for the tastelessness of their dress—white things that looked like very dull underclothes, leaving the arms meatily bare.

Fine acting within; here, these women suggesting a 'Great White Sale,' and, almost, a display outside a butcher's shop, walking through the Arabian Nights: outside, Berlin, drinking its bean-coffee and its beer, hurrying about in trams and dilapidated taxis, unattractive, suffering very much still from the effects of war, but working—working like no other capital city of Europe at the present time.

JULIAN HUXLEY.

HUNTER'S LUCK.

BY H. HESKETH PRICHARD, D.S.O.

ONE day I chanced to be in the library of the Zoological Society looking over old volumes of the Proceedings, and in one of these I found, to my great interest, an article written by Professor Collett, describing a colony of seals which he had discovered on the wild skerries which face the Arctic Ocean off the Fruen Islands in Norway.

He described the seals as *Phoca barbata*, but in a paper, which I luckily chanced upon in a later volume, he made the correction and stated that the seals were *Halichærus grypus*, the grey seal, an animal in which I was then very much interested; so that I made up my mind that some day I would make my way to the Fruen Islands and to the skerries beyond which face the Arctic Ocean.

Several years passed, and I had already paid one visit to Norway in order to shoot elk, when, upon a second visit, my wife and I found ourselves in Trondhjem. The month was June, the weather as good as can be hoped for in those latitudes, and the Fruen Islands were visited occasionally by a small steamer.

A visit to our excellent British Consul at Trondhjem, and a delightful Norwegian family, who owned the greater part of the Fruen Islands, offered to lend us their house upon one of the largest of the group. So, with a certain amount of food and a couple of rifles, we set forth to try conclusions with the great grey seals.

I suppose that every hunter who has had any large experience always finds one animal which he only obtains—if so be that he obtains it at all—with the utmost difficulty. If this is so, there can be no question whatever that I have wasted more sleep and had more failures when trying to shoot a large grey seal bull than in all the rest of my hunting life put together. Indeed, for many years I was very lucky, so amazingly lucky that in ten or a dozen trips I lost only one animal which I really regretted.

Anyone who has done a lot of shooting and who has experienced a run of luck like this becomes not elated, but humbled, by continual success. Sooner or later he knows the pendulum will swing. After all, in big-game hunting the luck is one day with the hunter and the next day with the hunted, and one has only to go on long enough to experience both kinds of fortune.

Every hunter knows how, through certain periods or patches of his hunting life, everything goes wrong. The big stag is always on the far side of the herd; there is always a watchful hind between you and him; your shooting position is bad time after time; little unexpected events upset the most careful of calculations. Nature, instead of being your friend, is your enemy. The wind seems to blow from all quarters at once; the leaves crackle underfoot on the dampest of mornings.

But, as I say, I had had nearly ten years of good luck, except and only when I essayed to kill large bull grey seals. I had hunted them in many lands—in the Shetlands, in the Orkneys, in the Hebrides. I had camped for a week on an island in the Atlantic in the hope of a shot—this was off the coast of Ireland—and finally I had seen their great heads in the fiord-like bays of Labrador; but I had never succeeded in killing a really big bull.

A really big bull is a magnificent animal, the largest of all British mammals—that is, if we except the whales. A big bull may weigh 600 lbs. and upwards, and may measure from 9 feet to over 10 feet in length. Ten-foot monsters are rare indeed, but they certainly exist. I remember one enormous one that I saw swimming about the rock of Haskeir, out in the Atlantic off the Uist coast—for the grey seal is like no other animal in the world, in that it lives out upon the wildest skerries and rocks in the Atlantic. Here the females bring forth their young in October or November. Unlike the young of the common seal (*Phoca vitulina*), they cannot swim at birth, and are three weeks old before they take to the water.

No animals in the world swim more powerfully than the grey seals. Anyone who has seen them standing like a man treading water in the tremendous surge which washes upon the outlying rocks of the Atlantic will realise their wonderful power.

‘And great man-breasted things stood in the sea.’

Many difficulties surround the shooting of grey seals. To shoot is one thing: to obtain possession of your trophy is quite

another. He is very hard to catch lying upon a rock, and to shoot him in the water is useless unless you have studied his habits. There is only one position in which it is legitimate to shoot at a grey seal when he is swimming, and that is at the moment he rises, when he has just filled his lungs with air, and when he is swimming along the top of the water in the position in which a man swims. But very often he comes up in the perpendicular position, and then, if you put a bullet through his brain ever so surely, down he sinks into the depths beneath.

He very rarely comes into shallow water—though he does so in one or two places, of which I learned the secret in my long pursuit of him.

The most common form, as far as I know, has a marbled black skin, but I have seen enormous bulls that were grey in colour, and there was one on Haskeir which was grey with a white ring round his neck. It was this seal that was said to have wrenched the club from the hand of a boatman who had landed on his breeding skerry, and who incontinently fled before him.

When he is on his breeding grounds the *grypus* bull is a pretty savage customer, attacking with tremendous fury any other bull who may come into his vicinity. I remember once seeing a young bull which, without exaggeration, was half bitten in two, and which also was killed on the rock of Haskeir.

Now as to my previous experiences when hunting grey seals. You must understand that the main difficulties lie in getting to the place where the seal lives. We spent altogether five months in North Uist, and only three times have we prevailed upon the local boatman to risk the journey to the great rock of Haskeir, twelve miles from the little bay from which we sailed, and exposed to the full force of the Atlantic surge, the nearest land to westward being the frowning cliffs and windy 'tickles' of the coast of Labrador, with two thousand miles of the Atlantic in between.

I suppose I have seen two or three hundred grey seals, and among them perhaps twenty good bulls, but never had I shot a really good specimen—indeed, I had never shot at one of them. I had killed a fine and heavy thick-set animal, which, however, measured only 7 feet 11 inches. From all appearances this bull had come to his full growth, for he was certainly not a young one. Many and many a time had I been quite close to far bigger bulls, animals measuring 9 feet in length and certainly weighing five or six hundred pounds; but they had always been in a position in

which I could not shoot. Again and again, it is true, a little good fortune and I must have got my bull; but everything had been against me, and my only satisfaction was that I had done little or no harm—for though it is bad to fail, and worse to miss, these things do not compare with the feelings of a hunter who has wounded and lost a splendid beast, killing it for no good purpose, and losing it in the depths of the sea.

Such, then, was the position, and I think I was keener to get a really large bull *grypus* than I have ever been on getting any animal before. There was at that time no really good specimen in the British Museum, and only those who have hunted the grey seal themselves can know the many difficulties which lend savour to the chase, or can visualise the wild and marvellous surroundings into which it takes you. It is necessary to land, perhaps, upon some rock where human foot may not have trodden for perhaps a decade, and landing is no easy matter. Your boat is dancing upon a six-foot swell. With your rifle slung over your back, and a pair of tennis shoes upon your feet, you have to cling and cling; then the boat backs off, and you crawl over to look down upon the rocks where the seals lie. They may be there, but they are much more likely not to be. The noises of the disembarkation will almost surely put them off, and it is common enough to reach the great rookeries where they live—great, that is, as masses of rock, not in numbers of seals, for I have never seen more than forty together, and that only once—only to find that the wind renders an approach hopeless. Then there is nothing to do but to sit and watch the seals in the water with your telescope, and in due course to get back into the boat as best you can, and so once more for home.

We left Trondhjem on a small paddle-wheel steamer upon one of those seemingly endless quests so well known to the traveller who gets off the beaten track along the coast of one of the fiords of Norway. For two days we called at little lost stations made up of a house with a red roof, some tow-headed children, and a bearded man who sculled out for the mail. Not that he had any mail, but he usually had something to sell. So we passed up the coast, and then had a very nasty patch of open sea as we ran across to the islands.

It was late at night when we arrived at the island on which the house which we were to occupy stood—very late, twelve or one o'clock; but this made no difference whatever, for the mid-

night sun was burning in the sky. A bearded man, whose name I have forgotten, but of whom in private conversation we always spoke as 'Svend Forkbeard,' rowed out to the steamer. I think he was very much upset when he heard that there was an Englishman and an Englishwoman to come ashore, for he waved his arms a good deal in the boat, and then came aboard, when I gave him the letter of introduction, after reading which he talked at a great rate in Norwegian. He showed us down into his boat, however, and we went ashore to find a delightful house, into which we were ushered. Svend's wife came and fired off another long stream of Norwegian at my wife. Meantime I wandered out and looked across the few green pastures and barren rocks of the island to where the Arctic Ocean rolled in flood on flood of molten splendour towards the north-west. When I came back everything seemed to have settled down, and my wife and Mrs. Svend were engaged in admiring the beauties of the latter's large and numerous progeny.

Then the best bedroom was prepared, in spite of our remonstrances, a tin of pressed beef opened, and some splendid coffee brought in. We neither of us remember the end of that meal, but when we woke next morning the sun was streaming in through the open windows, and a sharp breeze from the north was blowing the curtains far into the room. We went down to find more coffee and rolls, after which we sallied forth to interview Svend Forkbeard on the subject of grey seals. My wife, who is quick at languages, had already, in the few days we had been in Norway, and with the help of German, which she knew well, begun to be able to make herself understood. I explained to Svend how long ago an Englishman had come to those islands and had found many grey seals. He agreed that there were grey seals there, his word for them being *kobbe*, but he said there were also grey seals on some rocks that were much nearer.

One advantage of the midnight sun is that you are bound by no considerations of light in the making of plans. We could as well start to shoot at ten in the evening as at ten in the morning. As a matter of fact, I do not remember when we started, but Mrs. Svend put us up what in Scotland would be called a 'lunch,' and we boarded one of those long, low craft with a carven figurehead which have come straight down from Viking days, and, accompanied by Svend Forkbeard and another Norwegian, we set off for the seal rocks.

We had not been going very long when I realised that the seal of Norway is different from the seal of Scotland, for what was an undoubted grey seal popped up about 200 yards away. Seeing the boat he went down again, and appeared at 400 yards. He was not a big bull, and I would not have shot him, but I was very much interested to see how wild he was—and no wonder, since the Fruen Islands are pretty regularly hunted by professional seal-hunters.

All day long we cruised among the islands, and in every little channel saw scores upon scores of eider ducks, for the whole of these islands are really neither more nor less than an eider-duck farm. The birds are wild, but no one molests them, and at given times Svend and his men descend upon the nests and rob them of their down. It is a lucrative enough business, although a very definite cleaning process has to be gone through before the down is marketable.

Besides these endless eiders, which, as I say, literally cover the face of the waters, and which are so tame that they allow a boat to pass within ten or twenty yards of them, enormous numbers of cormorants haunt these waters. These birds are a positive plague. They do no good to anyone, and they take a terrible toll of fish. Never have I seen them in such quantities. Had they been worth a charge of powder one could have mowed them down by twenties and thirties as they sat upon their rocks, which were so foul that it was impossible to approach them up-wind.

All that day we cruised in the Viking boat from rock to rock, but saw only one or two small grey seals, until at last, as we were coming home in the evening, a young bull appeared, at which the Norwegian raised a cry of '*Kobbe*'; but this seal, like Ugudwash the sun-fish, was by no means the seal I wanted, so we made our little island once more, and once more almost fell asleep over our supper.

Then followed two or three days in which we went out in the boat, but with no good fortune, for there was always a bit of wind, and we could not visit the main skerry where the great seals were for certain.

Life on the island was extraordinarily interesting, and would have been still more so—to me, at any rate—had there not been an unfortunate *contretemps*. I noticed that all the islanders drank milk; but there was water, and I drank that water, with the result that I became afflicted with an exceedingly severe form of

indigestion. No doubt the water, which comes from a little pool in the middle of the island, is not good, or not good, at any rate, for the alien digestion.

Meantime, wherever we went, Svend Forkbeard was always on the look-out for the nests of eider ducks, and I do not know how many countless islands we landed upon to take these nests. Bird life on the islands was not very plentiful, except, as I have said, as far as eider ducks and cormorants were concerned. There were cattle and sheep, and the islanders lived an almost ideal life. I think that if I had my choice and desired a contemplative employment and a happy end to a strenuous life, I should set up with my family as an eider-duck farmer on one of these isles.

A certain amount of fishing, boat-repairing, the work of a farmer who drives his tiny flocks one hundred yards or two hundred yards from one pasture to another, the gathering of the eider-down, and the keeping off of poachers—who never come, and who, if they did come, would find the expenses of their trip more than anything they could gather—these are the employments of the Fruen island farmer.

For the rest, all those whom I saw seemed to have enormous families of brown-skinned, fair, and exceedingly healthy children, who early learned to push themselves about in the Viking boats, and who at eight or ten years are as good at gathering eider-down as their bearded fathers.

There could be no doubt that all the grey seals in the neighbourhood of the main island had been scared away by professional hunters, and nightly we prayed that the little wind that was still holding us back from the great skerries on the edge of the Arctic Circle would die down. At length came not a day, but an hour of some unknown day, when Svend Forkbeard said the weather would do. A party of five of us—my wife, myself, Svend and two of his comrades—went aboard the Viking boat and rowed out to the north-west.

It was easy to see merely by looking at the Viking boat that the adventure was to be a big one. We had food, and we had water. We had a number of grappling chains for pulling seals from the bottom, and, above all, we had an enormous six-feet-long sea telescope, with an object glass two and a half or three feet across. This sea telescope is much used by Norwegian fishermen. The idea is to force it down below the ripple; the glasses are, of course, of common glass, and by thus getting below the

ripple one can look down into the green depths of the Arctic Ocean.

As far as I could gather, Svend and his friends were full of hope and pretty confident of success. One of them kept telling me of a seal that haunted those skerries. He kept on making a sign that its head was as large as the circle he could make with his arms.

It was a broiling day, and the sun beat down out of the heavens, turning the sea into a great yellow moving plane—in fact, one of the most salient memories I have of all that hunting up by the Arctic Circle is of a boat with a carven figurehead, ever moving, very slowly, and always, as it seemed, over a yellow sea. It was not long before we cleared the islands altogether, and now we began to realise how hard it is for man to visit the grey seal in his haunts. For a week we had had good weather, and yet out here there was still working a long and tremendous swell of deep water. They were positively mile-long swells; at times one could see right ahead, and then suddenly one would see nothing. They were, as it were, imperceptible swells, so long were they, and yet these imperceptible mighty swells were capable of making landing upon an unprotected skerry impossible. Once or twice we had a slight slant of wind which, as it was from the land, was all in our favour, and the Norwegians hoisted a red square-shaped sail. We had been reading Rider Haggard's book, 'Eric Brighteyes,' aloud to each other in the evenings, and when the men hoisted this sail they were exactly like the pictures which illustrate that excellent work.

Time moves slowly in the Fruen Islands. One thing we had done by common consent on our arrival, and that was to lose all count of time. What did it matter? There was always daylight. Food came at certain hours—in order to summon us to it if we were on the island a small child was sent, who pulled at my wife's dress. In the boat we ate when the spirit moved us.

I do not know how long we took rowing and sailing to the outer skerries, but at last, from the top of one of those long, endless yellow rollers, three skerries came into view, and were hailed by Svend with an ejaculation. He came and pointed them out to me, and patted me on the shoulder, and told me a lot of things that I am sure were very interesting about them, but of what he said I have not the vaguest idea. One thing as we approached a little nearer I was able to see for myself, and that was that

we hit on a most unfortunate juncture of the tide. The tide was pretty high, and now I prevailed upon the men to lie upon their oars while I got out my telescope and carefully spied the skerries.

It was not long before I had the seals. There were three of them. One was bobbing about in the water near a bare rock shaped like a bank of sand rising from the deep—such a bank as you may see on the east coast. The rock did not rise more than ten feet out of the water, but upon it lay two seals. To one of them I paid no attention at all, though I think he was a good big bull, but the other—oh, the other! He was a seal such as a hunter might sometimes see in dreams. The sun had dried his coat so that he appeared to be of an even grey all over. But his size! He looked like a walrus. I cast my telescope over the other two skerries, but I saw no seals there, or at least none of any size, though one or two were bobbing about in the water. But neither the other skerries, nor these seals, nor any other thing in the world interested me. Nothing seemed to exist but that one enormous seal.

I handed my wife the glass, which she was pretty good at using, and in spite of the motion of the boat she had him in an instant.

'Oh!' she breathed.

But it was one thing to see the seal at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile, and quite another to approach him. There was no other rock within several hundred yards of the low skerry upon which he lay. To approach him in the boat meant inevitably putting him off. He was, in a word, as completely master of the situation as if we had thrown our rifle and cartridges overboard.

Meantime, Svend Forkbeard was talking with the other two men, but nothing seemed to come of that, and he waved his hand, and as far as I could gather said that he was a large seal, a very large seal! The worst of it was that something had to be done, for the chances of our getting another day on which we could visit these skerries were not great. Already Svend had waved his hand ominously toward certain signs in the sky; besides which we felt that we could not go on straining the hospitality of our Norwegian friends for ever, and we had hoped to leave the island by the steamer which called on the evening of the following day. So, obviously, something had to be done.

Now, in various hunts that I have had after grey seal, I found that if you could land upon the rock which they inhabit, they were very apt to come up and survey you. I therefore got my wife to ask Svend if the water all round that rock was deep. Svend understood. Bending down, he drew a little map in the bottom of the boat from which it appeared that all round this rock there was a ledge of rock extending perhaps as far as one hundred yards in places, in others only fifty.

My mind was made up, and slowly the plan of action was translated into language that Svend could understand. It was briefly this. The boat would row straight in, and that great seal would take to the water. I would leave the boat and land upon the rock, where I would lie while the boat stood off at a distance of half a mile or so. There was a chance that the huge seal would come up and take a look at me, for I would probably be an object of interest to him, lying at full length on the rock. Then, should he come up where the water was shallow, I might get a shot. If he came up in the deep water, there was nothing more to be done. And so it was arranged. The boat went in as quickly as possible. I took a flying leap and landed on all-fours with my rifle slung across my back. I had not realised how very rough and how covered with barnacles are those rocks of the Arctic Ocean. I tore every inch of skin from my palms.

Meantime, of course, the seal had slipped off the rock and into the water, and had appeared again at a distance of about five hundred yards. Now the position was this. I lay upon the rock, and the boat rowed away. I think I must have lain there somewhere about half an hour, when one of the smaller seals rose quite close to me. He looked at me for a moment, raised himself almost head and shoulders in the water, and then went under with a pop like the drawing of a cork.

Meanwhile, no sign whatever of the big bull. Another quarter of an hour passed, and then I was aware that the big bull had risen about two hundred yards from the rock, and was looking at me intently. I could, I think, have shot him almost for certain, but of course he was in the deep water. Presently he submerged very gently, and a few minutes later my heart literally rose into my mouth as I was aware of him some sixty yards from me, and swimming along in the best possible of all positions for a shot. The moment the white bead of the rifle showed against his head I fired, and a moment later had sprung to my feet and was waving my rifle and handkerchief to the boat.

The great seal was quite dead. He lay upon the water; his head had gone under, but his back still remained showing.

The boat, which had pulled away to some distance, came like a skiff on the Thames. My wife took the tiller, and the three Norwegians plied the oars. How they made the water fly! But beyond a glance I had no time to watch them. My eyes were fixed on the seal. Slowly and slowly the bit of back, which had at first been of some size, grew less and less—beautifully and gradually less, as the poet has it—until at last the waters closed over it. Now there was nothing but oil left. Then slowly the oil itself dissipated. I had hoped the seal would float, but I was not worried, for I knew that where I had shot him he must have sunk into shallow water, though naturally I was very anxious that this should be definitely proved to be the case.

The boat came up over the swells, slowly enough, as it seemed, but really at a good pace. They had seen the shot through their glasses, and knew just where the seal was, and a moment later were over the spot. Then they thrust down the sea telescope into the water, and my wife called out to me that she could see the seal lying on the ledge of the rock. 'It is the biggest *grypus* in the world!' she cried out.

And now the tragedy happened. Svend Forkbeard and his friends had applied their eyes also to the telescope, and were in a state of great excitement, and it was just this excitement which ruined everything. One of them let down a kind of grappling iron garnished with sharp hooks, and dragged it across the seal. My wife, who was looking down into the water, and whom I would trust before any man of my acquaintance in a situation of the kind, gave a cry of dismay. 'They have got it on the wrong side of the seal!' she cried.

Now what had happened was this. In their excitement those keen but miserable Norwegians had let down their grappling hooks not between the seal and the deep water, but in such a position that they must drag the seal from its insecure lodgment on the ledge into the fathoms-deep Arctic Ocean. There was just the chance—not a bad chance—that the hooks might catch and enter above the barb, in which case the seal would be raised. In fact, the men said afterwards, as far as we could gather, that they actually had caught, but the weight of the seal had dragged them out again. Anyway, they dragged the seal off the ledge, and through the sea telescope my wife had the intense chagrin of watching it flicker down into the very depths of the sea.

They paid out more rope, but it was of no use. The grappling iron hung far above the sea floor, and on the sea floor the seal lay.

I had not realised the tragedy all at once, but now I began to do so. A moment before the seal was absolutely ours—the biggest grey seal that I have ever seen—and now our chances of retrieving it were absolutely *nil*. What is there, when one loses a great salmon or misses a great deer, that causes so dark a cloud to descend upon our spirit? It is, no doubt, the glory of sport that for a period all other desires and all other hopes are blotted out. We desire with the ferocity, however quiet and self-contained, that only comes to us in the other two great elemental passions, love and war.

The boat rowed up, and I got aboard. Then we went back in a hopeless kind of way and peered down into the deep green depths, from which now and again it seemed as if a bubble came up—but this, I think, was fancy. There was nothing to be said. We had touched the hem of the very garment of success, only to have it whisked away from us. And, worse than all, not only had I failed to get the great seal, but he lay uselessly dead on the floor of the sea.

After a time, in which we hopelessly swung the useless grappling iron, the Norwegian crew began to lose interest. They are a fatalistic people, and the great *kobbe* had been taken from them. There was nothing to be done. Slowly and mournfully we hoisted the square red sail. The wind was now blowing in fitful puffs out of the north, and there was a little touch of cream upon those endless rollers, which seemed to have turned darker. No longer did the yellow light flood the ocean, but the waves had turned to that colour so beloved of translators of Homer, where ever the heroes sail over the 'wine-dark' sea.

The big carven prow was turned for home. The heavens grew dark, and utter depression reigned in that little boat. After some half-hour of sailing I looked back, and could just distinguish the tragic skerry at the foot of which the uselessly slain seal lay among rocks and weeds. For a time my wife and I discussed all the endless possibilities that might have been, and then we ceased talking. The midnight sun hung in the sky, but strange lights had begun to pass, and glow, and fade. It was a fitting evening—for I think it was evening: at least it was long after twelve o'clock at night when we got back—for sorrow and disappointment.

SIR ARTHUR PEARSON'S FRIENDSHIP.

ON a blazing Monday in the summer of 1915 an infantry subaltern, junior in rank though not particularly youthful in years, was instructing recruits in musketry on a seaside range in a somewhat remote part of these islands. To the admiration of his pupils and to his own well-concealed surprise he had opened the shooting himself, by putting on a four-inch group. On the Tuesday the bull's-eye was swimming unsteadily in a curious haze. Two days later the subaltern was blind. A short period in hospital, still in the remote district, was followed by discharge from thence, and then, after a brief interval, the War Office requested 'Mr. X. to resign his commission, as he was unfit for further military service.' There followed many months of inaction—inaction of body, that is to say. There was plenty to think about, and most of it unpleasant. In the intimate circle of relatives and friends there was a tacit conspiracy to regard his suddenly acquired disability as temporary. Some day sight would return as unexpectedly as it had disappeared, and all would be well once more. The individual cast for the chief part in this little drama had from the first no illusions; he had a shrewd idea that Fate had decided that his rôle should last his lifetime. Occasionally there came to him news of a place called St. Dunstan's and of its chief, Sir Arthur Pearson. Both names had a sinister sound; to think too much about them, to dream of invoking their aid, seemed to involve a surrender of the ludicrously little hope of the miracle happening. The name of the man was, of course, quite familiar, but of his personality nothing was known. Probably he was a well-meaning but rather fussy individual who had become a master of the art of persuading the blind to be content with the lot chosen for them by Providence. Months and months went by, and dismal introspection became the habit of his mind. Then one day there came a letter signed by Sir Arthur Pearson. It stated, among other things, how the writer had come to know, through one of the departmental heads of the National Institute for the Blind, that Mr. X. had had some trouble with his eyesight. The rest of the letter was a masterpiece of tact and imagination. It made no mention of blindness, but suggested that in case the present condition of the recipient's sight should prove to be prolonged, it might be well for

him to learn a few things which were taught at St. Dunstan's. There followed a few remarks as to ways and means; any financial difficulties in the case would be attended to. Wouldn't Mr. X. care to come and spend a few months at Portland Place, where there were a lot of very decent fellows in residence at the moment? It all sounded like an invitation to become a member of a rather jolly club, where one was already well known by repute. About this letter and others which followed, before all arrangements were made, there was no hint of commiseration or of patronage, nothing to jar the susceptibilities of the most sensitive. Instead, there was a spirit of comradeship, and, as comforting as anything else, a distinct odour of cigar smoke. Under the influence of that subtle aroma, preconceived notions of St. Dunstan's as an institution presided over by a pompous philanthropist were shaken. Still there were dreads and doubts.

Timidly up the stair of the great house in Portland Place crept Mr. X., obedient to the summons, 'Sir Arthur will see you in his room for five minutes.' Now for the momentous interview, now for the dreaded sermon. The door opened, again the odour of cigar smoke, powerful but fragrant. Then came the sound of the voice that one was to learn to know so well, the sharp, staccato sentences, the packing of much information into few words.

'Hullo, X., very glad to see you. Had a good journey up? Come along and sit down. We must have a chat for a minute or two.'

So this was the fussy philanthropist of one's apprehensions, this was the man whose career had been blasted by blindness. At any rate, there was nothing weak about the grip of the right hand, nothing undecided about the manner in which the left hand, placed on the visitor's shoulder, impelled him to sink down upon a luxurious sofa. The talk went on in rapid jerks, punctuated by puffs at the cigar.

'Delighted you have found it possible to come up. You and I have lots in common, of course. It's a great game, the newspaper game; nothing better. We must chat about that some time, but at the moment I can spare you only a minute or two. They give me no time to myself nowadays. I like dining with the officers, but seldom get the chance. Have to go out in five minutes to talk at a big hullabaloo in the City. You'll be all right here, I think. There's plenty to do, and a lot of very nice people about. The

great thing is to keep going and cultivate every faculty you have. What sort of work do you think of taking up? Well, never mind, there's plenty of time to think of that later. Now I must be off. I think the house is all right, but if there's anything you want, ask So-and-So about it. We're always open to hints. Come and see me any time you like. By the way, I suppose you're over the funk stage of not seeing as well as you used to? It's not pleasant at first, but that can't be helped. What you've got to do is to call it a beastly nuisance, and then carry on and forget about it. That's all there is to it. Good night, I hope you'll be happy here. Let me find the door for you. Detestable things, half-open doors—aren't they? The only way to learn how not to bump into them—is to do it once or twice, good and hard. You're six paces from the stair, and the rail is on your right. Mind the twist halfway down. All right? Good.'

That was how the thing was done. You were caught up in a whirl, and when things steadied, and your breath came back, you found yourself in a new and most delightful world. You were a guest in a house where the most charming people came and went, all of them cheerful. In a day or two you had become persuaded that they had been your friends all your life.

The weekly guest night at Portland Place. A famous statesman is coming to dine with the officers. For such occasions there was always a full parade of officers, including, in addition to those in residence, others who had completed their training at St. Dunstan's and were settled in London. Sir Arthur stands on the hearth-rug in the drawing-room, faultlessly attired, as the novelists say, in evening dress. There are two doors to the room, and by both these men are entering until there are about thirty present. The host is kept very busy. 'Good evening, Sir Arthur,' is uttered by every arrival. There are all sorts of accents, from confident, resonant Canadian to the mild and deprecatory Scottish. He at whom this fusillade of greetings is directed makes no mistakes.

'Good evening, Black; how are you? I hear you've passed your typing test. Good work. You'll find a typewriter very useful.' 'Well, White, how's things with you? They want you back into hospital, don't they? Rather a bore, isn't it? But they'll make you a professional beauty before they've done with you. It really is wonderful what they can do with this plastic surgery, as they call it. I'll be round to see you after they've fixed you up.'

'Good evening, Green. I want a word with you. Met a man this morning who thinks he can do something for you. He's a doctor in your part of the town, and he is quite keen to recommend you whenever you put up your plate. Remind me about it after dinner, I'll let you have his name.' (These remarks addressed to a masseur.) 'Good evening, Brown. What's this about your officers "four" beating the crack crew from St. Dunstan's? Think you can do it? I'm not so sure. They're a hefty lot, these Canadians and Australians up there. I saw them on the lake this afternoon, and they were going very well indeed. They'll take a lot of beating, I can tell you.' And so on, and so on, instant recognition of every guest the moment his voice is heard, and a special bit of good cheer for each.

Then comes the snap of a closing watch and a snort. 'Time's up. Our good friend the eminent statesman is late. Being late for meals is the unpardonable social sin. I make it a rule never to wait for anybody. We'll give him five minutes and then go in. Eminent statesman is all very well, but dinners don't improve with keeping, nor servants' tempers either. Ah, there you are, Sir Blank. I've just been holding you up to these young men as an awful example of a social sinner. Oh, an air raid, is there? We didn't hear anything. A raid is about as near to a good excuse for being late for dinner as anything could be. Let's go in.'

In the early days the blinded officers lived as the guests of Sir Arthur and Lady Pearson under one hospitable roof. They were a very happy family. But as the casualties mounted up, and the family grew larger and larger, the original and very pleasant régime became no longer practicable. The demands upon Sir Arthur's time grew more and more onerous, and to his own very sincere regret he could meet the officers only occasionally. Even during the week-ends spent at Brighton or on the river his work followed him. The result was that we met him most frequently at meals. His table talk was most fascinating. He would become quite lyrical over the beauty of the flowers on the table. Someone would tell him there was a bowl of such and such a flower there, and he would describe shapes and colours as if he had the specimen under a microscope. He loved all the things of the countryside, and after a walk he would descant upon the colours of the foliage, the beauty of this view and that, the state of the crops, and what not. In this there was no affectation; he had seen all he described, seen it through

the eyes of his escort with the aid of his own vivid memories of the scene and its features. He was a fine horseman, a good swimmer, a useful man in a boat, and a tireless walker. Only a week or two before his death an old friend met him riding full tilt on the Sussex Downs with his attendant groom well in the rear. A charge of recklessness coupled with a warning of the possible consequences drew from Sir Arthur a characteristic rebuke.

'I knew I had three miles of good turf in front of me,' said he, 'and there was nothing to be afraid of, except that the horse might put his foot in a rabbit hole. No sensible horse does that, and this is a sensible horse. A horse doesn't want to fall down any more than you want him to fall. If you know your horse and your country, leave it to the horse, and don't scare him by being nervous yourself.'

As for the ordinary sports of the moor and the forest and the covert-side, he had complete contempt for those. Exercise and fresh air and all other delights of the country could be got by doing the walking and climbing and leaving the shooting out. He used to tell of the disgust of a ghillie who took him out deer-stalking, only to find that his employer's interest in the chase evaporated immediately after, having circumvented the quarry by strenuous climbing and patient observance of the rules of forest craft, he finally got within easy range of the stag. 'We had won the game,' said Sir Arthur. 'We had pitted our wits and our knowledge of the country against his instinct and his speed. But why on earth should we shoot the poor beast that had given us so much fun?'

Slovenliness and half measures were detestable to Sir Arthur. Of a clean-built, athletic, handsome figure, he made almost a fetish of physical fitness, and he had a horror of becoming 'tubby,' as he called it. He confessed that he had experimented with all the dietetic fads that had ever been invented, and had come to the conclusion that plenty of exercise and strict moderation in eating and drinking were the only reliable specifics against obesity. He dressed very well, and although their knowledge of this fact was, for obvious reasons, acquired at second-hand, his guests paid him the flattering compliment of imitation, and very smart bow-ties were much in evidence at Portland Place. He insisted upon the due observance in his house of the social ritual, holding that blindness was no excuse for anyone being either ill-dressed or ill-mannered. His conversation was like himself, vigorous, volcanic in its energy, and it ranged over a very wide area of subjects. Perhaps the most

fascinating of all its features was its freshness and originality. Where other brilliant talkers would turn to literature, history or philosophy to illustrate or reinforce an argument, Sir Arthur's examples were always found in his own experience of men and affairs. Seldom or never would he make a literary allusion, and he was never at a loss to find a modern instance for a wise saw. When it is remembered that most of his auditors, on the occasions to which reference is being made, were very young men eager for information about the world which they could no longer see, and which because of the interruption of their education they had never been able to study, it may be considered that this was exactly the kind of talk that would appeal to them, and would be of value. In this respect, as in all others, Sir Arthur was the most generous of men. With the most callow of inquiring youngsters he would take infinite pains to explain a process, to elucidate a problem, or to recite a chapter of contemporary history, and all his examples and illustrations would relate to people and to events which were real to his young disciple because they were familiar to him. And then Sir Arthur had one supreme quality as a counsellor, he always knew what he thought. There were no doubts or reservations, and he never pretended to a knowledge which he did not in fact possess. To listen to him was an invigorating mental tonic.

His views on some subjects were original to the extent of being startling. As his acute biographer in *The Times* remarks, he regarded literature as a story, and he was impatient of men of many words. Occasionally he gave the impression of applying the test of commercial success to cases where it had no relevancy. He probably would not have subscribed to the view that the best seller is necessarily the best book, for this would have led him to esteem Charles Garvice above Henry James, for example; but he did take the view that a book which commanded a great sale could not be a bad book. I think that his faith in the commercial test did not arise from an undue respect for the wealth which success brings in its train. Indeed, the mere making of money had for him no attraction. He used to say it was the easiest thing he had ever tried. But he had a profound respect for the man who 'knows his job,' to use the popular phrase, and a firm conviction that it is only the sound article which in the long run can stand competition and secure the public favour. In addition to this he had something of the delight of the craftsman in the thing perfectly made. Of recently published books he considered Mr. Wells's 'Outline of

History' a supreme achievement. It was exactly the kind of book which he desired, the story of the world lucidly told, and with no irritating and disconcerting details. Yet he himself was a master of detail in his own sphere. On one occasion we were discussing the value of rapidity of decision in business affairs, and the view was being taken that the ability to form a judgment quickly was a sign of genius, and that the mental process was intuitive. One member of the party ventured to suggest that, after all, to be right was more important than to be rapid, that while geniuses are scarce, highly successful business men are many, and that capacity to realise a problem and all its implications and to find a solution in a flash depended in most instances upon a complete knowledge of detail, which in turn is the result of experience. Here is an example of Sir Arthur's resort to his mental pigeon-holes.

'I believe there is something in that. I remember once long ago watching the best news editor I ever had at his work. We were very anxious to get information about a new dodge that the Admiralty were up to, and the news editor was giving instructions to a reporter to go down to the country and interview the man who knew about it. He told the reporter that this man, who was a very big big-wig, knew all about this particular subject, and probably would not talk about it, whereas he thought he knew about photography, and would talk about that as long as he had a listener. "You get hold of him and talk about photography, and when he has talked himself into a good humour, you get this secret out of him." The thing came out as he had planned and, of course, I was very pleased about it, and said so to my news editor, and I wound up by telling him that he had an extraordinary *flair* for this sort of thing. "*Flair* be hanged," said he, "I have thirty years' experience of my business."'

One remarked as a curious and significant circumstance that his journalistic reminiscences centred mainly around the gallant but unsuccessful attempt to resuscitate the dying *Standard*. Perhaps it was because this was the only major reverse that his journalistic arms ever suffered that it so interested him in retrospect. He was a leader of men who took success as a matter of course, and to whom defeat was strange and not easily to be understood. He would muse over this episode with a rueful humour, and the solution of the puzzle still evaded him.

Sir Arthur Pearson found real joy in his work for St. Dunstan's. I remember his returning one evening from a dinner party held to

celebrate the triumph of a political cause of which he had been a leading apostle. He told us of the men who had been there and of the nature of their talk. It had been a small and very distinguished company of veterans of an old fight; every man there bore a name famous in the great world. One wondered whether the meeting, with all the memories it must have awakened of the days of old, had not caused a wistful longing for departed joys, departed never to return. But of vain repining there was no slightest sign. Rather we got the impression that he had, that evening, been re-visiting the glimpses of the moon and that he was glad to be home, glad to be at his real work again.

In his book, 'Victory over Blindness,' he has told the story of St. Dunstan's, and here I make no attempt to deal with the system of training there. Nor do I write anything of the hospital interviews by which many a soul was saved from the black horror of despair. I have tried to make a picture of the man as he appeared to us in the full vigour of his strength of mind and heart. My task has been attempted in vain if I have not shown him to be one who commanded our admiration and our love. Now that he has gone, we begin slowly to comprehend how great a power in our lives was his inspiring friendship.

FREDERICK MARTIN.

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